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DANNY BAKER

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How to save the whale: a hundred people; 11 boats; and a posse of camera crews

Nicole Veash and Michael Streeter

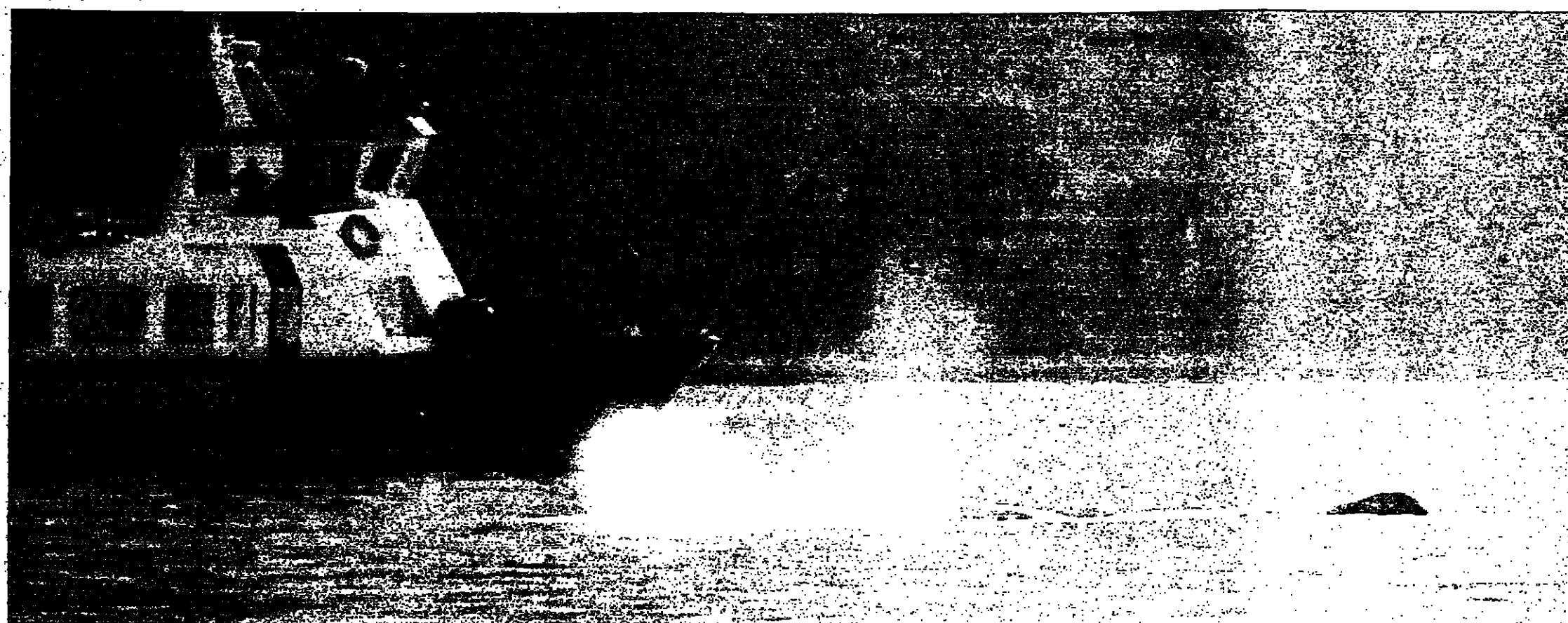
A second attempt to save Moby, the 40ft sperm whale stuck in the River Forth for five days, appeared to have failed last night after the animal became stranded in just six feet of water. The whale had been slowly heading towards the safety of the open sea when it became beached at Drum Sand, near Cramond.

Rescuers were hoping that the 40-ton whale would be swept to safety by the turn of the tide at 8pm, but feared it was unlikely to reach open waters by this morning.

Charles Bickett, general manager of rescue co-ordinators Deep Sea World, said Moby had at least gone past the Forth bridges, despite his apparent aversion to the traffic noise. He said they would probably assess the situation later today and possibly start a fresh rescue attempt tomorrow.

A flotilla of 11 boats, watched by a growing media pack, was involved in yesterday's rescue attempt, including two tugs loaned by BP. They stayed upstream of the whale, making what organisers described as a "wall of sound" to force the animal out to sea and away from the rocky shallows.

Four-year-old Moby was heading from the Arctic towards the Azores - a whale breeding ground - when he became disorientated, Alex Kilgour, the promotions manager at Deep Sea World, said. "They say there is no better place to have a heart attack than in a hospital and Moby couldn't have chosen a better place to be stranded than outside an aquarium."



Rescue mission: A ferry boat trying to guide the stranded whale out of the Firth of Forth yesterday. Experts believe its sonar sense may have become disoriented

Photograph: Jeff Mitchell/Reuters

Labour's £2 billion plan to shut down hospitals

EXCLUSIVE

by Fran Abrams

Labour is drawing up plans for a programme of hospital closures to save £2bn which it wants to use for free dental checks, less rationing of treatment, and better salaries for doctors and nurses.

The programme would mean closing or merging hospitals in areas where similar facilities are offered on more than one site, but providing transport for patients to travel between towns for treatment and for relatives to travel for visits.

Although Labour believes its scheme could lead to large savings over a number of years for other projects, some experts said last night that the reduction in costs would be negligible.

Last night Labour's health spokesman, Chris Smith, confirmed that the party would try to save money by merging the management of National Health Service trusts. No decisions would be made while

Labour was in opposition, he added, and the closure programme would have to be made on a case by case basis.

"In relation to the merger of trust hierarchies, I am sure there is scope for this without losing facilities by simply removing unnecessary streams of bureaucracy."

"I think any sensible government is going to want to look at this sort of question. What we have strongly said is that we will be removing great swathes of bureaucracy from the system by our reforms of the internal market," he said.

Gordon Brown, the shadow Chancellor, has promised to meet the Conservatives' spending targets in the first year of a Labour government and to review the situation in the second year, but that leaves Mr Smith facing a very tight budget for his department.

In a television interview yesterday, Mr Brown said Labour

hoped to cut administrative costs in the health service from between 12 and 13 per cent to below 10 per cent. He also commended the action of Labour's spokesman on Scottish affairs, George Robertson, who has already told the NHS trusts running hospitals in Scotland to

He added that some of the savings generated by Labour's programme to get 250,000 young people off benefit and into work would be used to cut the budget deficit.

Some government officials are said to believe that hospital closures are now the only an-

ever a proposal is made to remove a hospital or one of its facilities, a local public health hearing will be set up. If the party goes ahead with a large number of hospital closures, this system is likely to be tested to its limits.

Hospital closures are always controversial and are bound to cause public outrage wherever they are proposed.

Last night James Johnson, chairman of the British Medical Association's consultants' committee, said that the revelation did not come as a surprise but that it would be bound to cause controversy.

"Politically, closing down hospitals is about the worst thing you can do short of becoming a self-confessed child molester," he said.

Although the BMA would look at proposals case by case, a recent study had shown that mergers of hospitals with more than around 350 beds each did not save money, he said.

The proposals were based on the "fairly simplistic" view that

'Closing down hospitals is about the worst thing you can do short of becoming a self-confessed child molester'

"start immediate consultations" on reducing their numbers from 45 to 25.

"He is going to merge a number of them, saving £30m in Scotland alone. These are the sort of changes we must make to get money back to where it should be," Mr Brown said.

swert to the growing problem of how to fund the NHS.

However, sources claim that Labour is planning to go further than Mr Smith suggested and to make much bigger savings than he could hope to achieve simply by removing layers of bureaucracy.

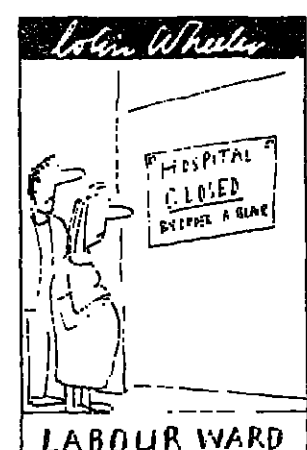
Labour has said that when

the only way to stop hospitals from overspending was to close them, he suggested. At present, most trusts are in the red because they have continued to perform operations after their budgets have run out.

Anthony Harrison, a fellow in health policy analysis with the King's Fund, agreed that simple mergers of trust boards would save "peanuts".

"The evidence is lousy. To save money you have to close whole sites, but there will be great political pressure not to do that," he said.

However, the Audit Com-



mission had identified some 30 small hospitals where there was an argument for closure on the grounds that they could not deliver treatment of a high enough quality, he added.

He said the idea of providing transport services was a sound one, though in cases where accident and emergency departments were closed the extra ambulance costs were prohibitive.

Election countdown, page 7

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The strange case of Lady Thatcher and Her Majesty's coat of arms

Ben Summers and Michael Streeter

While in power, critics often accused Margaret Thatcher of behaving as imperiously as any monarch.

Now, in a move which may cause mild irritation at Buckingham Palace, the former prime minister has gone one step further by ditching her own coat of arms - and adopting the Royal Arms as her official letterhead.

In recent weeks letters have been sent from her private office bearing the design which, in its fullest version, is for use by the Sovereign alone.

The coat of arms contains a central shield bearing the arms of England, Scotland and Ireland, surrounded by the garter, supported by a lion and unicorn. The motto *Dieu et mon Droit* is below.

Though the Queen's personal version is fuller, there are



Up in arms: From left, the crests of the House of Lords, of Baroness Thatcher, and the Queen. Lady Thatcher ditched her own arms and has adopted a logo similar to the royal one

understandable grounds for confusion as the shield, mottoes, lion, unicorn and garter are common to both.

The form being used by Baroness Thatcher is that used by formal state bodies: secretaries and departments of state, and the Houses of Parliament, for example.

And, but for the substitution of the words Margaret Thatcher, it is also identical to that of

the office of 10 Downing Street - perhaps a sign that even after more than six years the baroness still finds it hard to adjust to non-prime ministerial life.

The normal House of Lords logo used by peers places the Arms inside an ellipse, together with the words "House of Lords", making clear the state body to which the use of the Arms relates.

Many peers simply have their

names printed beneath the logo on Lords paper rather than have the whole letterhead printed for them.

The heraldry expert Thomas Woodcock, Somerset Herald at the College of Arms, dismissed a suggestion that as a Lady Companion of the Order of the Garter she could use the Royal Arms undomined. "She would use her own arms as a Companion of the Order of the

Garter and not the Arms of the Sovereign," he said.

Of the head on her notepaper, he said: "Well, it's certainly the Royal Arms. All I can say is, I find it very odd. I can't think of any reason why they should be there."

Meanwhile, the ceremonial figure of Black Rod, asked if Lady Thatcher's use of the Royal Arms broke the rules, said: "Well, I'm... not making any comment on that at all."

The letterheads of other former prime ministers do not allude to their former status: Sir Edward Heath uses a simple House of Commons portcullis and a plain typeface, while Lord Callaghan simply types his name beside the House of Lords logo.

But Lady Thatcher's own rather quirky design, an unusual mixture of binoculars, weighing scales, and keys, seems to have been quietly dropped for grander things.

QUICKLY

Drug tolerance

British police's foremost expert on the international drugs trade said yesterday that trafficking could be stopped "virtually altogether" but the public chose instead to accept "tolerable" levels of drug abuse. Page 6

Student reform

A new survey of the lifestyles and spending habits of today's undergraduates uncovers a disturbing picture of sensible, highly organised young people equipped with mobile phones and personal computers and spurning a grand tradition of student debt. Page 3

Euro handover

Detailed plans for a single European policy on immigration and judicial matters and an end to internal border checks will be unveiled this week, opening the way for the biggest transfer of power to Brussels since the Maastricht Treaty. Page 11

Suicide bomb warning

As relations between Israel and the Palestinians deteriorate in the wake of the suicide bomb in Tel Aviv, the head of Israeli military intelligence said yesterday that he expected further suicide attacks. Page 10

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significant shorts

Alarm as pilot is grounded on drink-fly allegation

A pilot who allegedly flew a plane while under the influence of alcohol is being investigated after being forced to land by alarmed air traffic controllers.

The 63-year-old pilot was escorted from the four-seater plane at Southampton airport after an erratic landing in which he was said to have swerved off the runway and almost hit a fence. The man refused to give a breath-test to police but was seen by a police surgeon who confirmed he had been drinking. His aircraft keys were confiscated and he was released pending an inquiry by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

The man, from Denham, Buckinghamshire, had been flying to Jersey when he strayed into London air space on Friday. Air-traffic controllers at Heathrow contacted the light aircraft but were concerned with the response they received from the pilot.

A CAA spokesman said the man could be charged with endangering aircraft or with endangering people on the ground.

Man found hanged in police cell

An investigation was launched yesterday after a man accused of rape was found hanging in a police cell.

Marion Downes, 30, was found at 3am at Harlesden police station, north-west London. Police officers tried to resuscitate him and he was taken to the Central Middlesex Hospital, also in north-west London, where he was pronounced dead at 4am.

Mr Downes, from Harlesden, was arrested on Friday and was later charged with two counts of rape. He was due to appear before Brent magistrates' court today. The Police Complaints Authority will supervise the investigation into his death: a post mortem examination was due to be held yesterday.

Clamping down on the clampers

Motorists are often forced to pay £100 or more to have their wheelclamped cars released by unscrupulous private operators, the Automobile Association said yesterday.

These sums far exceed the £40 defined as a "reasonable fee" by the Court of Appeal in 1995, the AA added. Mike Watkins of AA legal services said the "massive hike in the release fees have underlined government failure to curb wheelclamp extortion".

Payments of £70 were the norm and demands of £100 or more were growing since the courts ruled, in November 1995, that clamping on private land was legal in England and Wales, he added. "The police are very reluctant to deal with aggressive and threatening wheelclampers and the Government has failed to build on the Court of Appeal ruling to regulate against excessive charges," he said. "The law offers no protection and the Government won't control wheelclamping, so motorists, including the disabled and elderly, continue to suffer intimidation and extortion."

E.coli warning for Scotland

The man heading the inquiry into Britain's worst *E. coli* outbreak warned yesterday that there could be an increase in the number of cases in Scotland this year.

Professor Hugh Pennington said it did not bode well that there had been so many outbreaks during the winter. The professor (left) is leading the government inquiry into the Lanarkshire *E. coli* outbreak which claimed the lives of 18 people at the end of last year. Since then, there have been smaller *E. coli* scares in Arbroath and in the Scottish Borders areas which, he said, had surprised him. "It is a quiet time of year for *E. coli* normally. It goes into a kind of hibernation in winter. It hasn't done this year," he added. "I think one has to plan on the assumption that it might get even a bit more common in the next year or two." The professor was talking in advance of his speech on *E. coli* to the Edinburgh International Science Festival.

Women are considering ditching the title 'Ms' because it is outdated and alienates men, it emerged yesterday.

Some younger women think it should be replaced by "Miss" for all women, married or single. A motion proposing the change will be debated at the annual conference of Business and Professional Women UK Ltd in Bristol next month. One of the women putting forward the motion, Anne Freeman, an information technology manager from Dunstable, Bedfordshire, said that "Ms" tended to be linked with aggressiveness by some male employers. However, Marcelle D'Argy Smith, former editor of *Cosmopolitan* magazine, said: "To say 'Ms' offends men just typifies the toe-curling apathy of women and the domineering servitude to men."

Rita Bangle, general secretary for the women's organisation, stressed that the motion had not yet been accepted by its board or membership, and would "disappear" if it did not find favour.

Horse-owner loses £1m in jewels

A stolen jewellery collection valued at more than £1m belongs to the Lebanese racehorse owner, Fathi Kalla, police said yesterday. Mr Kalla, whose horse Corrupt was a favourite in the 1991 Derby, declined publicity to help retrieve the gems for fear of becoming the target of yet another raid. The jewellery had been removed from a safe box and brought to the house for the engagement party of Mr Kalla's eldest daughter, which will go ahead next Thursday, police said. The jewels were not insured.

Outrage over fishy business

A 30-year-old angler caused a wave of protest during a fishing competition after going into battle with a secret weapon - a hi-tech echo sounder that helps to find fish.

Roger Mortimer used the £325 sonar device in a fishing competition on the River Glen near Spalding, Lincolnshire. His rivals claim that the device gave him an unfair advantage after it helped him to catch 374 small fish and scoop the £60 fourth prize.

Lottery rollover result

Three winning tickets shared Saturday's £13,986,252 Lottery jackpot - the first to roll over from the middle of the week. The winning numbers were: 41, 39, 27, 40, 14, 43. The bonus number was 21.

people



Wax work: Helen Dion of Madame Tussauds adjusting a model of the Buddhist temple yesterday

Chinese furious as Dalai Lama finds a new friend

For a man of peace, he has caused quite a stir. The Dalai Lama, the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, yesterday visited Taiwan, bringing together two of the most incendiary issues for mainland China.

China has assailed his journey - and an expected meeting on Thursday with Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui - as the collusion of "splittists" bent on independence from China for both Tibet and Taiwan. China has ruled Tibet with often brutal military force since occupying it in 1950.

Taiwan authorities and the Dalai Lama clique are colluding and using each other, consorting with evil doers, going further and further down the road of splitting China, "China's official People's Daily newspaper quoted unidentified 'Tibet specialists' as saying.

Last night, the Buddhist god-king addressed a crowd estimated at more than 20,000 in a stadium in the port city of Kaohsiung. It was the first of three major "enlightenment meetings" at the heart of his busy schedule in Taiwan, which he and his hosts have insisted is strictly religious. Buddhists swarmed for a glimpse of him and supporters waved Tibet's snow-lion flag to greet him.

Intense media scrutiny and crowds of protesters, both for and against his visit, have led to tight security around the Dalai Lama. His limousine was sandwiched in a 20-car motorcade, a treatment usually reserved for foreign heads of state.

His visit has stirred a long-dormant debate about whether Tibet is part of China - a question with deep ramifications for a far hotter debate about whether Taiwan should reunite with China or go it alone.

Taiwan's exiled Republic of China government, ousted from the mainland by the triumphant communists in 1949, maintains that Taiwan and Tibet both are part of China and that Taiwan should reunite with the mainland, though not before Peking embraces multi-party democracy.

Advocates of Taiwan's independence from China insisted that the Dalai Lama be treated as a visiting head of state, calculating that this would bolster Taiwan's own right to self-determination. Agencies: Taipei

Author finds destiny in a Cornish field

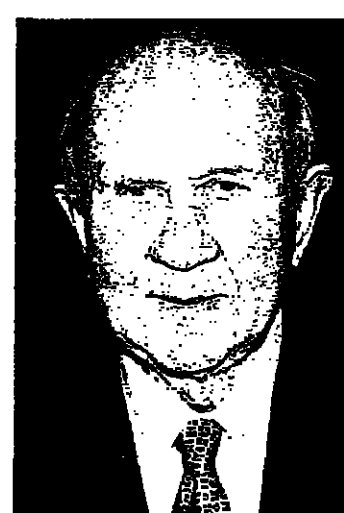
The ashes of author Derek Tangye (right) were scattered in a Cornish meadow yesterday, near the cottage home *The Minack Chronicles* author shared with his late wife, Jeannie, a few miles from Land's End.

It was a memorial both to Mr Tangye, who died last October, aged 84, and to his wife, an author in her own right, who died 11 years ago. Her ashes were also scattered in Honeysuckle Meadow.

Mr Tangye's books about life in Cornwall, and their cats and donkeys, attracted an international readership and were translated into several languages.

Mr Tangye's sister-in-law, Mrs Moira Tangye, said the couple's home, which attracted hundreds of visitors when they were alive, had become "a bit of shrine" for fans since they died.

It was expected that their rented cottage would be re-let by the estate which owned it. But the 20 acres stretching down to the sea, bought by Mr Tangye and called Oliverland after one of their cats, would be cared for by the Minack Chronicles Trust he set up.



Two donkeys left at Dominick after Mr Tangye's death, Merlin and Susie, are still living close to the sea, at the Sidmouth Donkey Sanctuary in Devon. Many fans call at the sanctuary to see them.

An auction in Penzance next month of the couple's literary and photographic collection, as well as items of furniture, is likely to attract huge interest from fans.

"Derek had the tremendous gift for getting home to people, and he left extreme emotion in readers," said Mrs Tangye.

A commemorative anthology, to be called *A World of Forever*, is to be published by Michael Joseph.

Chess prodigy is youngest ever

Chess whizz-kid Etienne Bacrot has moved into the history books by becoming the youngest-ever grandmaster. At the tender age of 14 years and two months, the French schoolboy gained the coveted title by winning a tournament at Enghien-les-Bains, near Paris, at the weekend.

Etienne beat the record set by a previous chess prodigy, Peter Leko of Hungary, who became a grandmaster in 1994, at 14-and-a-half. His chess career began at the age of four, when he was taught how to play by his uncle. By the time he was five, he had joined a club, and two years ago he won the under-12 world championship in Brazil, beating a succession of leading adult players to become the world's youngest international chess-master.

Etienne's latest victory came after a last-round win over the Canadian grandmaster Kevin Spraggett. His extreme youth contrasted with his fellow tournament winner, Viktor Korchnoi, who is 65.

He trains solidly for up to two weeks a month, attending school in Amiens the rest of the time.

Even at school, where he is considered a brilliant pupil, he practises for two hours a day. Joanna Snicker

A double act with film world's hottest secrets

Could *The English Patient*, the hot favourite at the Academy Awards, be pipped at the post for Best Picture? Could Brenda Blethyn's dowdy, dotty mum in *Secrets and Lies*, the antithesis of the Hollywood glamour puss, really drive 'em wild on Oscar night?

Just two people know the secrets of tonight's Oscar results: accountants Frank Johnson and Greg Garrison, the little grey men from Price Waterhouse. For nearly 70 years, the firm has collected and counted the votes - 5,227 of them this year - that make movie history. Mr Johnson, a 20-year veteran, and Mr Garrison will be picked up from their Century City offices today, carrying a set of envelopes in plain zippered briefcases. A team of eight tallied the results

on Friday; the secret is theirs for 72 hours. "We do it all in one large room, but we use all parts of the room so that no one can see what anybody else is doing," Mr Johnson said. "Greg and I give out the ballots in small groups to the counters, so only Greg and I summarise the tallies and know for sure who has won."

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences pays Price Waterhouse about \$30,000 a year for the work - a snip compared to campaigns waged for the films by their producers and distributors, who can spend up to \$4m trying to snag an Oscar. Academy members are routinely courted with private screenings, presentation videotapes, scripts, books, phone calls, and even home visits. Tim Cornwell, Los Angeles

briefing

EVOLUTION

Better diet means Britons will reach new heights

Britons will grow at least 13cm taller over the next few generations, thanks to better nutrition, an expert in ageing has predicted. Delivering a lecture in London, Professor Robert Fogel, of the University of Chicago, said humans had not yet reached their optimum height, body size, health or life expectancy.

He predicted that the average height of the nation will increase from 177cm to 190cm. Babies were being better nourished in the womb, and fewer women were smoking while pregnant, he said.

Indeed, Professor Fogel said growth could be even higher than he had forecast. "We really do not know what the maximum height for humans is yet," he said. "But the signs are that we still have a long way to go."

The average British male in 1790 weighed 134lb - 20 per cent less than he does today, Professor Fogel said. "As we have gained control over our environment, body size has increased over 50 per cent and life expectancy has risen by around 100 per cent."

HEALTH

Bar workers risk fatal disease

Bar staff are facing unacceptable risks to their health by being exposed to broken glasses, according to a study published today. The researchers, writing in the journal *Occupational Medicine*, say action is urgently needed to protect them from the threat of cross-infection.

An investigation of 91 bar workers in South Glamorgan revealed that 74 per cent reported cut injuries, of whom 18 per cent were injured on more than 10 occasions. Between 18 and 15 per cent of the injuries required hospital treatment, and that although only 30 per cent of staff wore gloves, which showed no evidence of offering protection against injury.

The research team from the University of Wales College of Medicine, Cardiff, said that most injuries were inflicted to hands through collecting and washing glasses, and in occasional fights.

Just over half of those questioned had had contact with body fluids such as blood, vomit, urine and faeces, increasing the risk of catching the potentially fatal liver condition, Hepatitis B.



EDUCATION

Books shortage hinders schools

Many schools are failing to meet the needs of the National Curriculum because of a shortage of suitable books, with parents unaware of the problem, it is claimed today. A study by the School Book Alliance has found that nearly one third of pupils share books with classmates and another third are forced to use damaged or outdated editions.

With half of parents in the survey ignorant of the problem, most were shocked to learn how little schools spent on books - an average of £19.23 per child. But only a quarter considered books to be the most important aspect of learning. With education being a hot political subject in the run-up to the election, two-thirds of the parents said they would be more likely to vote for a party which promised to devote extra money to education.

Professor Eric Bolton, a former senior chief inspector of schools, blames computers for the empty libraries and decrepit books.

"There are very good arguments for increasing the number of computers in schools," he said. "But those arguments should not obscure the fact that books are absolutely essential for learning to read and for the development of a child's education."

Starved of books, free, School Book Alliance, 22 Endell Street, Covent Garden, London WC2H 9AD. Joanna Snicker

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Crime is top priority for councils

Tackling crime is the most important service that councils can deliver, a survey of attitudes has found. Three-quarters of people questioned placed crime and law and order issues at the top of their list of priorities.

Fire services were also regarded as very important but, surprisingly, rubbish collection and street cleaning were placed above schools, which were rated the same as pavement maintenance.

The MORI poll, carried out on behalf of the Local Government Association, also disclosed that six out of 10 people would like their authorities to have more freedom to fix Council Tax at the level needed to provide good services. Twice as many people were satisfied with their local council as with Parliament, the figures suggest.

Street lighting was a priority for 49 per cent of the sample, while parks, open spaces and trees were important for half of those questioned.

SOCIETY

Popularity of spirits drains away

Sales of mineral water are sparkling, but spirits are drooping, according to a survey published today. As many as 63 per cent of hotels and restaurants reported increases in mineral water purchases last year. But the overall picture for spirits revealed a "steady, slow decline", said the *Hotel and Restaurant magazine 1997 Drinks Market Report*.

Based on returns from hotels and restaurants, the survey, conducted by NOR, revealed that after mineral water, bottled beer was the biggest growth area in 1996. South African wine was thought likely to show the biggest increase in sales among wines this year, although demand for wines from other "New World" producers - such as Australia, Chile and New Zealand - is also tipped to grow steadily, at the expense of European vineyards.

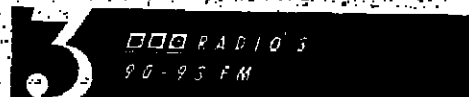
THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD		
Austria	£5.40	US\$10.00
Belgium	£5.40	US\$10.00
Canada	£5.40	US\$10.00
Denmark	£5.40	US\$10.00
France	£5.40	US\$10.00
Germany	£5.40	US\$10.00
Greece	£5.40	US\$10.00
Italy	£5.40	US\$10.00
Japan	£5.40	US\$10.00
Netherlands	£5.40	US\$10.00
Spain	£5.40	US\$10.00
Sweden	£5.40	US\$10.00
Switzerland	£5.40	US\$10.00
USA	£5.40	US\$10.00

OVERSEAS SUBSCRIPTIONS		
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Canada	£15.00	US\$30.00
France	£15.00	US\$30.00
Germany	£15.00	US\$30.00
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Japan	£15.00	US\$30.00
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The joker. Is this the right man to run a railway?



Rough ride: Brian Souter's firm is finding the going tough

Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

Brian Souter, executive chairman of Stagecoach, the bus and rail giant, is fond of a joke. But his customers, who have faced random cancellations and reduced services, are unlikely to find his latest offering funny.

Doubts over inquiry service

Claims that the national rail inquiry service is to be broken up and scrapped were denied yesterday by senior railway sources.

The *Sunday Times* carried the story on its front page yesterday claiming that the system could not cope with the large number of calls. "It is rubbish," said the director of a large train company and member of ATOC, the industry body which runs the telephone service.

A trifle silly, today they look stupid. The train company's problems started this year. Stagecoach, which took over the line in February last year, had produced steady, if unspectacular, improvements until January.

Stagecoach and Mr Souter are known for aggressive business tactics which have seen the company undercut competitors in the bus industry and take over no fewer than 30 rival firms.

Mr Souter rarely recognises the picture so frequently painted. A member of the evangelical Church of Nazarene, who neither smokes nor drinks and often opens his rambling mansion and estate, Ochtertyre, in Highlands, to disadvantaged local children, Mr Souter is frequently hurt by press profiles.

Often attending bankers' meetings in a red jacket. Kickers boots, a collarless shirt with only a Tesco bag for his belongings, Mr Souter's exterior belies his sharp mind. His rapid wit is his most disarming weapon. "People say to me: Yours is a classic tale of rags to riches, Brian... how come you're still wearing the rags?" is a favourite Souterism.

SWT cut 70 drivers from its workforce. While this left the company with 13 more drivers than British Rail's minimum requirement, many had to learn new routes. Faced with a shortage of experienced staff, SWT started randomly cancelling trains. In February, it was forced to implement an emergency timetable, wiping 39 trains from its daily schedule. SWT now looks likely to get a £1m government fine for poor performance. Stagecoach may even lose the right to run SWT if services do not improve.



Sobered up: Modern students are more interested in planning their careers and surfing the Internet than indulging in heavy drinking sessions Photograph: Tony Buckingham

Students abandon sex and drugs for mobile phones and laptops

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

Whisper it in the campuses, but one of the nation's favourite clichés is about to be overturned. Britain's students have grown up.

A new survey of the lifestyles and spending habits of today's undergraduates uncovers a disturbing picture of sensible, highly organised young people equipped with mobile phones and personal computers. Spurning the grand tradition of student debt, a significant number have no overdraft at all, while their drinking and drug-taking is - they claim - as moderate as their expected starting salaries are ambitious.

The Graduate Consumers study, published today by High Fliers Research, lays to rest the *Young Ones* image of directionless layabouts living in squalor, rising after midday and subsisting on pot noodles. Appearing on the first day of the National Union of Students' conference in Blackpool, the findings also suggest youthful idealism may no longer drive the generation raised in the Thatcher years. Half plan to be earning £15,000 or more after leaving university this summer, and many plan to celebrate

graduation with a foreign holiday and a new car.

The "Class of '97," the survey concludes, are "ambitious, materialistic individuals who are enthusiastic users of the latest technology, expect to travel widely and are strongly influenced by the media."

Researchers interviewing almost 5,000 final-year students in 20 of England's top ranking "old" universities found one in 10 owned a mobile phone, one

in three a personal computer and almost two-thirds had their own hi-fi.

Eschewing the outmoded image of the bicycling student, lovingly preserved by extras in Inspector Morse, one in five finalists owned a car, while another quarter planned to buy one within a year.

As the first generation of young people brought up with a computer in the classroom, students were comfortably at

home with the Internet. Three-quarters had used it during their time at university, and approaching half had diligently logged on for academic research purposes. The most popular activity, however, was sending and receiving e-mail - presumably for contacting impoverished friends unable to afford a mobile phone.

For relaxation, three-quarters of students turned daily to television, though broadsheet news-

papers were also widely read. But in the bar, moderation prevailed among those with finals exams looming with the average consumption being less than nine pints of lager - still students' favourite tipple - per week. A quarter admitted to taking soft or hard drugs, though an equal number refused to comment.

After their three-year stint living on a grant frozen seven years ago and topped up with loans, students expected to leave university with an average debt of £2,360. More than one in 10 faced debts of £5,000 or more, but a fifth said they would owe nothing at all.

NUS president Douglas Trainer, gearing up for a conference with student hardship high on the agenda, would have no truck with the portrayal of undergraduates as a class of high-spending Yuppie throwbacks splashing out on hi-tech gadgets. He said: "Statistics from the high street banks, from the Student Loans Company and from the Government's own income and expenditure survey show that students are really struggling. One in three works part-time and is forced to miss lectures and one in four considers dropping out because of hardship."

Vice-president for further education Danny Douglas said the survey took no account of the growing proportion of mature and part-time students, often taking higher education courses in local colleges. Mobile phones, he acknowledged, were increasingly widely used, but mainly because impoverished students often had no stable accommodation and could not be contacted any other way.

'We only have 15 Socialist Workers'

Nicole Veash

In the Seventies, Essex University was a hot-bed of political radicalism. Students had mass sit-ins, mounted noisy protests and locked themselves in the Vice-Chancellor's office to complain about campus rent rises.

Some 25 years on, its undergraduates are generally politically apathetic and more interested in clothes than grant cuts, according to 22-year-old Nicola Mends, vice president of communications for the university's Students' Union.

"Today's students like smart shirts and the Spice Girls. They concentrate on getting good degrees and a well-paid job, rather than campaigning," she said.

"The problem is, if you devote time to politics your degree suffers. Students are not prepared to do that because there are so many graduates on the job market now. I think we are a lot more mainstream now. I think we only have 15 Socialist Worker members in the entire university."

More than half the university's 6,000 students have personal computers, and approximately 75 per cent have a

personal Internet connection. Ms Mends said: "New technology is a big part of student life now. Some departments even put their lecture notes on the Web, and because all our essays have to be typed, computers are a necessity."

Neil Rodell, 22, an information business system technology student, said: "A lot of students use mobile phones for incoming calls because rooms in halls of residence don't have phone sockets."

"We would all like a decent job with a decent salary, but if the prospects are good, I would settle for less than £16,000 a year. I'm not that interested in material things any more, but I still like money. I guess it's because we are Thatcher's children."

Jim Jepp, 26, one of Essex's solitary Socialist Workers, said: "Some students are very wealthy, others are very poor. I think students are more interested in material things because they have less money to spend on them."

"In the 70s, student grants were in line with the cost of living, so perhaps material goods were of less consequence because they were easier to come by."

B-list celebrities to vote with their feet

Nicole Veash

A growing band of celebrities - largely from the invitation "B" list - is fighting for John Major with the pledge that they will leave Britain if Tony Blair takes up residence in Downing Street.

The millionaire former world champion boxer and pantomime regular, Frank Bruno, heads the round-up of migrating celebrities.

Bruno, who once described the taxman as his toughest opponent, said: "When I see my accountant, sometimes it hurts and you cry."

"But if Labour came in, I would do more than cry. A lot of people like myself are going to emigrate. I've got three young kids and what's best for them is for me to vote John Major."

The magician Paul Daniels, 58, has also said he may leave the country if Mr Blair gets into power. "I am wealthy enough to suffer the temptation of buying a house in Barbados and call it a day in Britain, take the money and go and play golf," he said.

"It will depend on the political situation. I should feel guilty because of my socialist roots, but I got that out of my system when I lived in local government. And I happen to think that capitalism creates jobs."

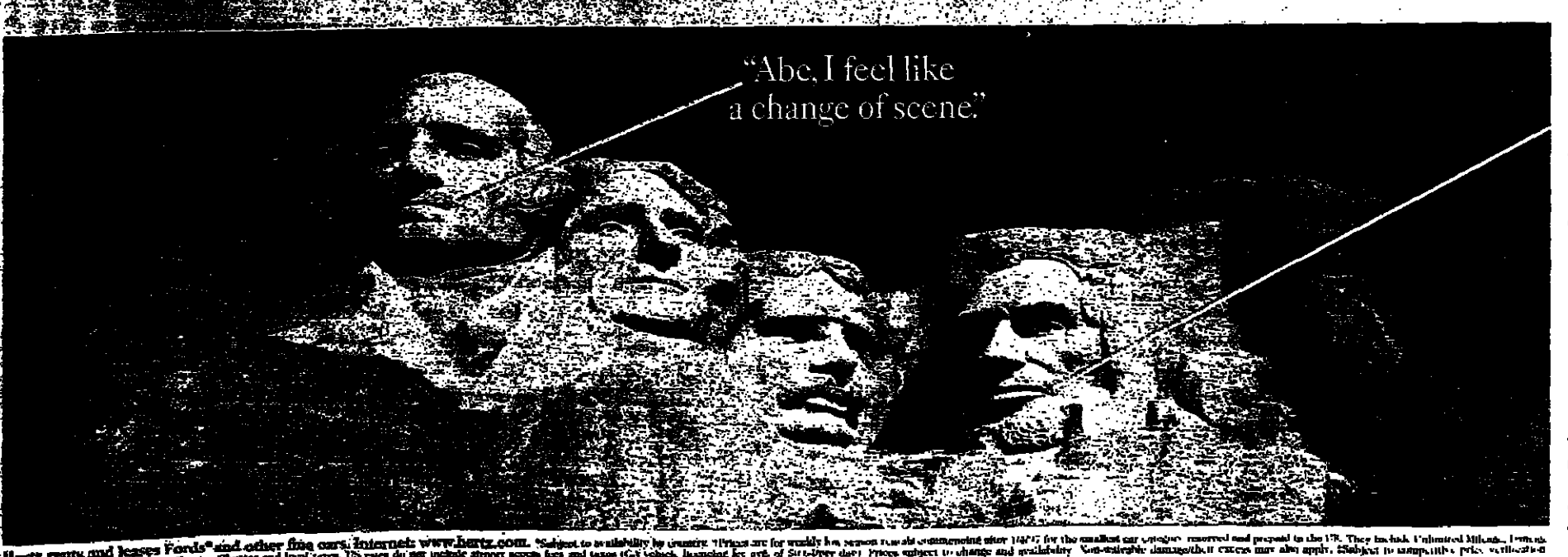
He joins the growing ranks of show business personalities whose views are likely to be canvassed in the run-up to the election. Earlier this year, the millionaire composer Lord Lloyd-Webber had to fiercely rebut rumours that he would leave Britain if Labour wins the election.

Even the snooker ace Stephen Hendry is not immune to the fear of Blair. John Gilmour, his accountant, said: "Stephen is still concerned about the tartan tax."

"There is a possibility that he would move south, so he would not be taxed twice. But he would hate to leave Scotland because he loves it here. He is going to have to wait and see until Labour give us more details."

But boxer Chris Eubank, who at the last election said he would emigrate if Neil Kinnock moved into No. 10, has changed his mind. The former champion said: "Five years ago I was not as experienced as I am now. I love the UK and I want to stay here."

Mr Blair can rest easy safe in the knowledge that at least one B-list celebrity has converted to New Labour and will be staying in Britain.



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Ulster tries to march into compromise



Billy boys: A woman photographing members of an Orange lodge as they prepare to march through the streets of central London yesterday

Photograph: Edward Sykes

David McKitterick
Ireland Correspondent

As marching season starts, Loyalists and Catholics seek way out of crisis

A series of private mediation attempts are under way in an attempt to ensure that Northern Ireland's Protestant marching season, which starts next week, does not see a repeat of last year's disastrous Drumcree stand-off.

Politicians, community leaders, clerics and others are working behind the scenes to try to avoid disagreements over marching routes degenerating into street clashes and disturbances.

Already there have been encouraging signs of a desire in many quarters to reach accommodation on contentious routes. The vast majority of the

3,000-plus parades pass off without incident, but in a few dozen cases the potential exists for serious disagreements and potential confrontations.

Last year's widespread disturbances had a seriously destabilising effect on many aspects of society, worsening already deep divisions, causing community relations to plummet, and sharply undermining public confidence in the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

They also cost tens of millions of pounds, leading to cuts in housing, education and other areas as money has been diverted to pay for the extensive damage and the huge security bill.

The first major march of the season, which is due to take place next Monday on Ormeau Road in south Belfast, now looks likely to pass off peacefully. The Apprentice Boys of Derry organisation, which has in the past insisted on marching through a Catholic stretch of the road, announced last week that it would march to the start of the disputed route but thereafter proceed by coach.

This has been hailed as a conciliatory move. In another encouraging development, Orangemen and Catholic residents in the Co Tyrone village of Dromore have come to a measure of agreement on a

parade to be held there on 12 July, when thousands of Orangemen all over Ireland and beyond celebrate the victory of King William of Orange at the Battle of the Boyne.

At the same time, however, precautions are being taken in anticipation of possible trouble. The RUC is acquiring flame-proof overalls for protection against petrol-bombers in case of outbreaks of severe rioting.

A police spokesman said: "We are clearly hoping we will not see a repeat of last year's trouble, but we have to be prepared."

Many civilians, meanwhile, are laying plans to leave the

Province during the marching season's climax in July, when the pivotal Drumcree march takes place. Travel agents report a larger than normal increase in holiday bookings for this period.

One Belfast shopkeeper said: "A lot of my customers say to me they hope there'll be no trouble, but if there is they'll not be here to see it. A lot of them are going down south. I've never closed my shop over the holiday period before, but this year I'm seriously thinking about it - I'll see how things go nearer the time."

The evidence is that most people want to avert another

summer of serious confrontation, but there are so many marches that if one or more leads to trouble the atmosphere can quickly turn sour.

Many observers are, however, drawing comfort from the fact that Portadown loyalist Billy Wright, regarded as one of the prime movers in last year's disturbances, has been removed from the scene. Last month he was jailed for eight years on intimidation charges.

In many cases, key decisions are taken not by the leaders of the three main Protestant marching organisations, but by small numbers of locals. In the past many such individuals have

tended to become engrossed in their local perspectives, sometimes to the exclusion of wider considerations.

There have also been complaints that the British Government has not done more to establish clear lines of decision-making on marching bans and re-routing. It has yet to accept or reject the main findings of a major report on parades which was published earlier this year.

The next government, whether Labour or Conservative, will face pressure for early decisions on marching procedures. The election campaign itself could also pose difficulties, particularly if the major Unionist parties become locked in a struggle for the hardline Protestant vote.

Tartan dividend pays off for Scots

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

The tartan dividend, the difference between Whitehall spending in England and Scotland, has risen by two-thirds over five years.

The Treasury's latest statistical analyses, published as Parliament broke up on Thursday, show that identifiable government spending in 1995-96 was £3,743 per head in England, compared with £4,614 in Scotland. Spending per head in Northern Ireland was £5,139, and for Wales it was £4,357.

In the wake of last month's row over devolution, Michael Forsyth, Secretary of State for Scotland, suggested that if the people of Scotland voted for a new Labour government, a future Tory government would review the question of Scottish funding, "with very dramatic and adverse consequences".

Mr Forsyth warned: "At the moment, Scotland is about 30 per cent better funded per head than England." It was suggested that Scotland could face a £6 bn penalty. In fact, that exaggerates the true position, as shown by the latest Treasury analysis "of general government expenditure by country and region".

The differential between England and Scotland was £871 per person for 1995-96, a difference of 23.3 per cent, compared with £524 per head in 1991-92, a difference of 17.6 per cent. That means there has been an increase of two-thirds in the differential between the two countries since 1991, but the difference is less than the 30 per cent mentioned by Mr Forsyth.

The biggest spending gaps were for housing, with per capita spending £143 for Scotland, compared with England's £68. But within the English regions, the difference was even more marked, with East Anglia, the South-west and West Midlands all recording per capita spending of less than £30 on housing.

The biggest differential of all went to Northern Ireland's budget for trade, industry, energy and employment budget, which was three times larger than the UK average: £293 per head compared with £91.

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Number's up for Captain Cook's village



Nigel Burnham

A storm of protest has erupted in a celebrated North Yorkshire fishing village over a plan to number houses and cottages which currently have historic names, so that postmen can find their way around more easily.

Royal Mail argues that the move is necessary because, although it accepts that the regular postmen "could do his rounds blindfolded", Staithes, near Whitby, is "a nightmare" for relief postmen who often get lost in the maze of tightly packed cottages which spill down the steep cliffside to the seafront, unsure whether to climb Slippery Hill or negotiate Dog Loop (an alley so narrow most people have to turn sideways to pass through (in search of Venus Cottage or True Love).

Royal Mail's regional headquarters in Leeds has suggested to Scarborough council that the numbering of homes in seven streets in Staithes—a conservation area within the North York Moors National Park—

would make life considerably easier for postmen and at the same time facilitate the computerised sorting of mail.

But residents of the village—made famous by Captain James Cook who in his teenage years worked in a local grocery shop before moving to Whitby to study maritime navigation—have greeted the proposal with derision.

Angela Ellis, clerk to the parish council, said: "We've had a meeting and we think the idea's daft. Royal Mail say it would make the computer sorting of mail easier but we think it would only cause confusion and a lot of upheaval."

"People would have to change their insurance, building society and banking details, and a lot of the romance of the village would be lost."

Jean Ecclestone, the village sub-postmistress and a legal historian, was similarly hostile. "Everyone is against it," she said. "The names of the houses and cottages of Staithes are part of our history in that they were named after fishing boats



Number's up: Andrew Griffin, one of the residents who is leading the fight against plans to do away with house names and introduce numbers to historic dwellings like Captain Cook's cottage (top left) Photographs Richard Rayner and Ian Duncan/North News Inset right: Captain Cook, Staithes' most famous son

— cobbles and yaws — which sailed from here. My cottage is called Star of Hope, for instance. But there's also Rose of England, Confidence Cottage, Blue Jacket House and True Love. How they can suggest sub-

siding these names with numbers just so their computers will operate more efficiently is beyond me.

"Anyway," she added, "The relief postman only has to ask if he gets lost. The fishermen are

up at four in the morning so there's plenty of people to ask."

"The proposal is silly," weighed in David Freeman, landlord of the Cod and Lobster pub. "Everybody who lives here and a lot of people who

don't know the cottages by their quaint, romantic names. There would be chaos if all of a sudden they had numbers instead — and I know for a fact there'd be dissenters who'd refuse to use them."

A Royal Mail spokeswoman responded: "We've made this proposal to Scarborough council simply to make the delivery of local mail more efficient."

"There's no problem when the regular postman is on but

relief staff have found it difficult to find houses in the maze of harbourside yards and alleyways.

"The truth is, there aren't many places in the country where houses only have names and Scarborough council has done something similar elsewhere to modernise things a bit. We just want to improve efficiency, avoid delays and provide a better service."

Michael Clements, director of technical services at Scarborough council, said: "I can see Royal Mail's point. The computerised sorting of mail is a system which obviously lends itself to numbers but I don't personally think it would work in Staithes."

"The layout of the village is such that it would be difficult to compile a logical numbering sequence and over the passage of time the numbers might well replace the names for good, and an important part of the village's history would be lost."

English crayfish claws back from the edge



Survival: A crayfish at a colony near Winchester in the care of the conservation officer Tim Sykes. Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

Humanity is helping the native English crayfish make its last stand on one of the country's finest chalk streams — having caused the crustacean to be almost wiped out in the first place.

Five years ago the crayfish, which resembles an elegant miniature lobster, was widespread along the length of the Hampshire Itchen, a near-pristine river which flows through Winchester. Now it survives in only one location in the headwaters of a tributary, the Cheriton stream. The disaster has been caused by a lethal fungal disease, introduced with the American signal crayfish.

It's the same story for streams and rivers across southern England, from Cornwall to Kent. The American *crayfish*, which is immune to the disease, is marching northwards.

If the fungal plague does not kill the native species, then the new arrival appears to do the job itself. Being bigger, more aggressive and mobile it can out-compete the Englishman and is also known to eat it.

The American was brought here in the 1970s to be reared in tanks and ponds for human consumption. It soon escaped into the wild along with three other non-native crayfish species which pose a lesser threat to the local variety.

There are thought to be only about 2,000 native, or white-clawed, crayfish in the surviving colony in the stream at Alresford, near Winchester. Thirty have been captured, including females carrying fertilised eggs, and are being raised at nearby Sparsholt College.

The hope is that they will breed and provide a captive population which can be released back into the Itchen some time in the future if the colony is wiped out. The native crayfish is protected by law, while releasing the invaders into the wild is now a crime.

The government's Environment Agency is also hoping to boost the colony's numbers by improving the underwater habitat for the crayfish. Ten tonnes of large, knobbly flintstones are being placed along a 100-yard stretch of stream bed. These provide the nooks and crannies the crayfish need to shelter in.

Tim Sykes, the agency's conservation officer in Hampshire, said: "The crayfish plague worked its way upstream at an amazing speed. Two summers ago there were just two colonies left and now we're down to one."

He found a female nestling in a hole in a stone. Folded into her curled up tail was a cluster of ball-bearing sized eggs, which she protects all through the winter and spring. She emerged after a moment, signalling her displeasure by giving him a sharp nip on the hand. The agency is working with local conservation groups in Yorkshire, surveying streams and rivers for the native and the aliens.

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news

Yard chief who believes drugs can be stopped

Ian Burrell

The British police's foremost expert on the international drugs trade said yesterday that trafficking could be stopped "virtually altogether" but the public chose instead to accept "tolerable" levels of drug abuse.

Tony White, former head of the drugs branch of the National Criminal Intelligence Service, will today take up his new post with the United Nations, based in Vienna, where he will be responsible for reducing international drugs supply.

In an interview with *The In-*

dependent, he said that British society had chosen a balance between the level of drugs-related problems and the degree of infringement of personal freedom it was prepared to accept from police and Customs officers.

Given enough resources, an island like Britain could stop the inflow of drugs by creating an anti-terrorist-style ring of steel, he said. Instead, people chose to support free-trade zones and to pass through Customs controls with minimal checks.

Terrorist-style ring of steel advocated to eradicate the problem of customs evasion

"It is the public who will determine what level of menace from drugs they are prepared to tolerate and what they are prepared to contribute or surrender in order to prevent the situation exceeding that level of tolerance," he said.

Last week, senior police officers warned that Britain was in the midst of a heroin problem worse than it had ever experienced. They said the drug was forcing girls as young as 12 into prostitution and spawning

a crime wave. Superintendent White estimated that drugs problems in Britain had already led to a "gentle backlash" in the form of workplace drug-testing and proposed drug tests on drivers.

He said such measures would have to be carefully implemented and "aimed as much towards helping individuals as punishing or stigmatising them". He added: "In recent years demand for licit drugs has risen in a similar way to demand

for illicit ones and the increasing pressures and anxieties of workplaces may well have contributed to this."

Mr White, who wryly admits he has personally never smoked so much as a cigarette, has journeyed from the coca valleys of Colombia to the opium fields of the Golden Triangle to build up his encyclopaedic knowledge of international trafficking.

He is concerned that the recent pre-occupation with the concept of "organised crime"

could weaken the battle against major drugs suppliers. The Home Secretary, Michael Howard, is setting up a national crime squad to target major criminals and groups of criminals.

Mr White, 52, said the fashionability of the term "organised crime" had been driven by dogma and political expediency. Major criminals could be prosecuted for drugs trafficking but not for Mafia activity.

"There is still no offence under UK statute of 'being en-

gaged in organised crime', or of 'being an organised criminal'. The emphasis then should be on offences for which we may hope to apprehend, charge and convict those involved."

Mr White said attempts to defeat major drugs traffickers by confiscating their assets had not lived up to expectations.

"The total amount of cash actually confiscated has been of nothing like the order envisaged and is only a tiny percentage of the profits calculated to accrue

from the illicit drugs trade in the UK," he said.

Mr White said the work of financial investigation by police and Customs was usually time-consuming and costly, and suggested that the creation of a multi-agency national financial investigation and intelligence service might be more effective.

Considerable work has been done to improve relations between police and customs but rivalries remain, said Mr White, who is also to step down as a member of the Association of Chief Police Officers' sub-committee on drugs.

Reach for the sky: British climber tries for death zone record

Charles Arthur

Alan Hinkes expects to spend the summer feeling scared, cold and tired, relying on his wits and strength to keep him alive while suffering crushing headaches and bone-aching pain.

The 42-year-old mountaineer is looking forward to it eagerly. "I'm not scared," he said last week. "I'm keen to get on and do what I enjoy."

Mr Hinkes, who sets off for the Himalayas this week, aims to be the first person to climb six of the world's 14 highest peaks in less than eight months – and so become the first Briton to reach all 14 of the "8,000ers", as the mountains over 8,000 me-

supplementary oxygen. He has used that only once, on Everest, where he was filming for ITN. In such conditions the brain, starved of oxygen, can be slow, while muscles tire far more quickly than at sea level. But the weather and snow conditions are more treacherous, demanding quick and accurate decisions. "If you stop above 8,000 metres then you die, because you get more and more debilitated," he said.

His quest begins in Kathmandu later this week. He will make the 10-day trek to the base camp of Lhotse mountain (8,516m), where he will spend about a month acclimatising to the thin air before starting his solo attempt on the first of the six remaining summits.

If that succeeds he will go to Makalu (8,463m) and Kangchenjunga (8,586), before travelling west to Nanga Parbat (8,125m) and then east again to Dhaulagiri (8,167m) and Annapurna (8,091m). Although he has allowed seven months, the schedule could be tight.

On the 8,000s, there's only a handful of days when both the weather and the snow conditions are favourable," he said. A wrong choice can mean death.

He has already faced such situations. "In 1993, I was on K2, and only about five hours from the summit, at 8,400 metres or so. It was perfect weather. But I wasn't happy with the snow slope... I had a big sponsor backing me and if I had summited and returned they could have made me rich, a household name. I thought, 'I could get very wealthy'. But I turned back."

A similar care eye for conditions meant that he summited K2 – known as the "deadly mountain" – in 1995 just days before Alison Hargreaves, the British mountaineer who subsequently died in a storm while descending from the summit.

He has wondered if he might succumb to the unreasonable drive of "summit fever" if the sixth summit seems in reach after he has completed the other five. "I hope not. I am always prepared to back off. To me, success is coming back alive. No mountain is worth your life."

To me, success is coming back alive. No mountain is worth your life.

tres are known. He is already recognised as this country's premier high-altitude mountaineer. In the past nine years he has climbed the other eight 8,000ers, including Everest and K2, the world's two highest peaks. But only five people have so far climbed all 14.

To speed up his attempts Mr Hinkes, a former teacher from North Yorkshire, will be ferried by helicopter from mountain to mountain once he has completed each ascent and descent – "taking 10 minutes rather than 10 days." The operation will cost more than £70,000, paid by his principal sponsor, the outdoor equipment company Berghaus.

His audacious itinerary will repeatedly take him into the "Death Zone", as the region above 8,000 metres is known. There, the body needs more oxygen than the atmosphere contains. That slows the brain down and makes the body use itself as fuel – a feeling, he once wrote, like "being crushed in a vice."

Even so, he will attempt each of the peaks alone and without

The toughest climb in the world



That Alan Hinkes schedule:

26 March: fly to Kathmandu - begin walk-in to base camp at Lhotse

12 April: earliest likely arrival date at Lhotse base camp

1 May: earliest likely attempt on Lhotse after acclimatisation

April-June: attempts on Lhotse, Makalu, Kangchenjunga. Each attempt will take between 2 to 4 days ascent, about same time for descent from base camp of first two mountains will take helicopter to next - "10 minutes rather than 10 days"

Late June: travel to base camp, Nanga Parbat, to avoid monsoon conditions on eastern Himalaya

July-August: attempt Nanga Parbat. Await end of monsoons and better weather further west

September: return west to travel into base camp of Dhaulagiri. Attempt summit. Transit to Annapurna. Attempt summit

October: complete Annapurna. If necessary, return to eastern Himalaya to attempt any of the first three that were unsuccessful

4 NANGA PARBAT, 8125m



5 DHAULAGIRI, 8167m



6 ANNA Purna, 8091m



200 miles

TIBET

INDIA

NEPAL

Kathmandu

Delhi

Alan Hinkes training at the University of Northumbria

Teachers prepare to fight over class sizes

Judith Judd
Education Editor

Teachers' unions, whose conferences begin today, will send out a clear message that they will fight a Labour government which does not improve school funding and cut class sizes.

A higher proportion of teachers than ever before say they will vote Labour at this election – 59 per cent compared with just over half in 1992 – but the unions are already warning that they will rebel if soundbites are not translated into action.

Union leaders are preparing to attack the shadow Chancellor, Gordon Brown's promise that he will stick to the Conservatives' spending plans – which involve cuts for education of 7 per cent – for two years. Though most of this will come from capital funding for universities, training for work and further education, schools are also scheduled to lose funds.

Even the traditionally moderate Association of Teachers and Lecturers, whose conference begins in Cardiff today, is ready for battle. Peter Smith, the union's general secretary, will argue for smaller classes, more money and an end to constant criticism of teachers.

Smaller classes and better funding are also top of the National Union of Teachers' agenda. Doug McAvoy, the general secretary, has made it clear that his union will be pressing Mr Brown to provide more money for schools in his first budget expected in July.

Nigel de Cruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters' Union of Women Teachers, says that he

will give a new government a year to sort out teachers' workload problems. After that, he says, his union will ballot its members on industrial action.

Chris Woodhead, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, is another bone of contention between Labour and the unions. Tony Blair, the Labour leader, has said he will keep his job, but both the NUT and the NASUWT have motions before them saying that he should be sacked.

Changes to teachers' pensions proposed by the Government which would make it harder for teachers to retire early have also caused bitter resentment. Tomorrow's ATL conference will discuss a motion that they will lead to "a logjam of older teachers solidifying on against their will" while young teachers and potential recruits are barred from entering the profession. The Government postponed the changes until September but there is no sign that Labour will rescind them.

Mr Smith said teachers would want to see a Labour victory as a turning point. "No one believes the skies will open after 1 May with £10 notes raining down if Labour is elected. There is going to be an enormous amount of goodwill, but whoever gets elected has to deliver on education," he said.

Labour has promised to switch funds to education from social security payments as unemployment falls over the five years of a Labour government. It has also promised to reduce infant class sizes and to repair school buildings using a combination of public and private funds.

Growing threat of space litter

Charles Arthur and
Nicole Veash

Outer space has something in common with Britain – a litter problem – which is posing a growing hazard to satellites and manned space missions.

Discarded items are crowding the heavens, and could seed a catastrophic "cascade" effect, where litter collides and smashes into small pieces forming a whirling junkyard destroying everything in its path. With speeds of thousands of miles per hour, a pea-sized piece of junk could destroy millions of dollars worth of space equipment. "Our great concern is that the proposal to launch 1,000 satellites for telephone communications by the end of the century will provide a concentration of mass which [could] prompt a cascade," said Richard Crowther of the Defence Research Agency.

In July last year the first documented space collision occurred between the French Cerise microsatellite and a piece of an Ariane rocket, destroying the satellite's functions.

"There are 8,500 objects that NASA can track up there, and only 6 per cent of them are operational, which means 94 per cent is space junk," said Dr Crowther.

"They vary from satellites left in orbit, to breakups from the old days, when the Soviets used to blow up their surveillance satellites, and a screw driver dropped by an astronaut."

Though many items of space debris are eventually dragged down into the atmosphere where they burn up harmlessly, a huge number remain in orbit.

Experts say that in future, space travel will still be possible, but will be more expensive, as rockets and astronauts will need extra shielding against the possibility of debris impact.

Body of stowaway boy found in jet undercarriage

Jojo Moyes

The body of a young boy who apparently stowed away on a jumbo jet was found in the aircraft's nose-wheel bay after it landed yesterday at Gatwick airport. Airline ground staff made the discovery after the plane, with 356 passengers on board, arrived from Nairobi in Kenya.

The boy, who is thought to

have been aged between eight and 14 and of African appearance, had crush injuries apparently caused by the hydraulic mechanism of the British Airways Boeing 747.

His body, clad only in tight clothing, was taken to Crawley hospital for a post-mortem examination. Whether he had been injured when the plane took off from Kenya or when it

came in to land at Gatwick, or whether he died from hypothermia in the sub-zero temperatures as the aircraft made its flight was not known.

Yesterday a search began to find out whether the boy was alone. Sussex police said they were not treating the boy's death as suspicious. Chief Inspector Mike Alderson said: "We don't know what motivated him to

take this desperate act, but whatever his motivation was, it is a tragic loss of life."

Bob Ayling, British Airways' chief executive, said: "This is a tragic loss of life which we very much regret. Security is paramount to British Airways and we take this incident very seriously."

In a similar incident, a stow-

away jumbo jet with temperatures falling as low as minus 40 degrees Celsius last October. Pardeep Saini, 22, was found suffering from hypothermia by baggage handlers at Heathrow following the flight from Delhi to London. His younger brother, Vijay, froze to death during the flight after the pair hid in a wheel housing. Mr Saini this

month appealed against his rejected political asylum application to stay in Britain.

Immigration officials were yesterday interviewing three men, thought to be from Albania, who were found hiding in a lorry trailer at Kettering, Northamptonshire. The men were discovered when staff at the site went to unpack the lorry, which had arrived from Calais.

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election countdown

Brown to use benefit savings to cut deficit

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Some of the savings generated by Labour's programme to get 250,000 young unemployed people into work would be used to cut the budget deficit, Gordon Brown said yesterday.

The shadow Chancellor's statement will surprise some of his frontbench colleagues, who had been expecting that the long-term dividend would be used, instead, to increase spending on education, health and welfare programmes.

That was not being ruled out completely last night, but Mr Brown made clear in a BBC television *On the Record* interview that some of the money saved on the Social Security budget would be used to cut public borrowing.

Mr Brown said Treasury projections showed a "black hole" of £26bn this year, and £19bn next year.

"The £26bn is big indeed," he said, "and the reason that we have made these tough decisions about public spending is because we recognise we have got to get the deficit down."

He said that would be achieved by renouncing recent "reckless" Conservative spending commitments, such as £50m for a royal yacht.

But when he was pressed, specifically, to say how the budget deficit would be cut back, Mr Brown said: "What we want to do, of course, and that's why we have this big welfare to work programme, is to cut the spending on social security..."

"We are reducing the deficit by tackling unemployment and high Social Security bills. We're also helping the reduction of the deficit by not making these extraordinary spending commitments the Tories have made."

Labour yesterday confirmed that it would be producing a sep-

arate "business manifesto" which would, among other things, say: "We will ask about public spending the questions any manager in a company would ask not how much more there is to spend, but how to spend existing resources more efficiently to meet our priorities. Ministers will be asked to save before they spend."

Party sources said that parts of the manifesto had been drafted in co-operation with Adair Turner, director general of the Confederation of British Industry.

Mr Brown also said yesterday that the CBI would be a key player in a business and government working party that would be set up during Britain's six-month presidency of the European Union, starting in January.

"I think this is a very important development because it shows that business and government can work together, both in Britain and Europe, to achieve common aims," he told *On the Record*.

"And we're getting away from this old idea that the public sector has got to say one thing, private industry has got to say another and there's never any proper relationship between them."

The business manifesto will say: "We have consistently proposed a number of areas, including energy, telecommunications and financial services, where Europe needs to open markets further in order to make the single market a reality, and to increase flexibility, productivity and employment."

"We will establish in government a British Presidency Working Group, consisting of government ministers and business representatives, including the CBI, to discuss themes and policy initiatives in preparation for the UK's Presidency of the European Union in 1998."



Phone-in: Tony Blair answering questions from journalists during a telephone press conference from his home in Islington, north London, yesterday Photograph: Adrian Dennis

New plea for Major to recall Parliament

Anthony Bevins

The Conservative MP Richard Shepherd yesterday urged the Prime Minister to recall Parliament to consider the findings of the report into the Commons cash-for-questions affair.

He told GMTV's *Sunday* programme that a recall was up to John Major, and he added: "I'm sure the Prime Minister doesn't want his campaign to be bogged down in the torrent of abuse that's now heaped on him personally, but on the whole system as well. I think this should be stopped in the bud straight away."

Mr Shepherd, MP for Aldridge-Brownhills, said the issue went much further than party politics. "It's something that we all of us, at the back of our mind, feel that the pride that we once had in our Parliament is now the subject of innumerable rumours and a deep suspicion. "And it undermines the authority of governments whatever the government is - if it's believed that MPs are merely in it for what they can get, that they hide and they're deceitful and that they're taking money on the side in envelopes."

But Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, told

BBC television's *Breakfast with Frost* programme that Mr Shepherd was wrong.

The delivery of a report by Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, was just the first stage in a protracted process which included the Commons Committee on Standards and Privileges taking evidence as a follow-up to Sir Gordon's report.

"This could take weeks," Mr Heseltine said. "The giving of the report only takes you to the next stage."

But Mr Shepherd's call for a parliamentary recall was

backed by Robin Cook, for Labour, and Paddy Ashdown, for the Liberal Democrats.

Mr Cook said a Labour government would ask Lord Nolan's Committee on Standards in Public Life "to have a fresh look at the system of regulating the conduct of MPs."

"As we move into the 21st century," he said, "people will not understand why the House of Commons cannot be subject to an element of independent scrutiny."

Mr Ashdown told GMTV: "This is a very, very big issue. The reputation of Parliament, as well as the integrity of the

MPs concerned, is at now stake. "In fact, it may well be the biggest issue in this election - which is the gap that's grown up in public respect and trust in Parliament itself."

Brian Mawhinney, the Conservative Party chairman, said last night that his party accepted the principles adopted by the broadcasters for a head-to-head debate between John Major and Tony Blair.

He said that as far as he was concerned there was no reason for the debate not to go ahead, but he added that Labour objections were a clear sign that they wanted to "pull the plug".

and Mr Blair was preparing to "chicken out".

Labour and the Liberal Democrats insisted that Dr Mawhinney was trying to "bounce" the other parties in advance of detailed discussions with the broadcasters.

Labour wants fair treatment for Mr Ashdown, and the inclusion of an audience - which was objected to by Mr Heseltine yesterday - but Lord Holme, the Liberal Democrats' negotiator, said: "It's not for Dr Mawhinney, before discussions have even begun, to dictate unilaterally the terms of the debate."

Labour enlists football clubs to tackle literacy shortfall

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

Switched-off youngsters scoring low marks at school would be lured back to learning at study centres in football stadiums under plans being announced by Labour today.

In the latest of a package of Labour proposals aimed at raising Britain's ranking in the literacy league, top football clubs would open their doors to inner-city pupils for evening homework sessions and lessons in the three Rs.

In return for their efforts, youngsters would be rewarded with a chance to take to the pitch afterwards for a match or for football coaching.

Labour believes the initiative, developed jointly with the Premier League, could be the one answer to the problem of flagging basic skills standards, particularly among disaffected boys.

Girls are currently 10 per cent ahead of boys in GCSE exam scores, while among 11-year-olds, only 57 per cent reached the expected standard in literacy.

The study support centres, each capable of accommodat-

ing between 60 and 100 children, would be launched at Arsenal, Newcastle United, Chelsea and Sheffield Wednesday football clubs, though Labour expects more to come on board as the scheme progresses.

Pupils would be able to attend on weekday evenings or Saturday mornings, probably for two hours at a time.

With support from a mix of

experienced teachers and student volunteers, primary-age children would be given timetabled literacy lessons, while secondary pupils would brush up on basic skills.

There would also be space for children to do supervised homework, and computer facilities for training in information technology.

Though the sessions, on offer free to local pupils, would

not be compulsory, Labour expects volunteers to be "queuing up" to attend.

Labour's education spokesman David Blunkett, a Sheffield Wednesday supporter, said the scheme was "an excellent and cost-effective means of raising standards and improving pupil motivation".

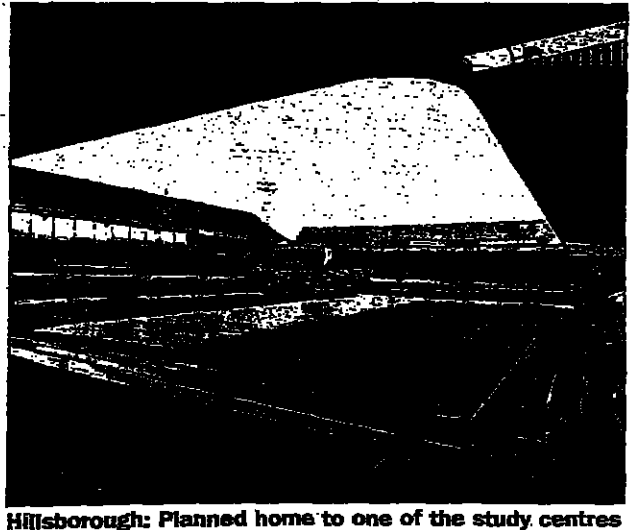
He added: "It is a unique and valuable venture in which everyone is a winner."

Funding for the scheme, being launched by Mr Blunkett at Chelsea Football Club today, would be split three ways between the Department for Education and Employment, the football club, and private sponsors.

Each study centre would receive up to £50,000 capital money, mainly for computer equipment, and £100,000 a year to cover running costs.

The stadium study centres would add to Labour's proposals for a new daily literacy hour in the national curriculum and extra training in literacy teaching for primary teachers.

The party said last month it aimed to bring 80 per cent of 11-year-olds up to nationally set standards by 2001 and 100 per cent by 2006.



Hillsborough: Planned home to one of the study centres

Scramble for seats as veteran MPs announce their retirement

Frank Abrams
Political Correspondent

Labour is facing a last-minute scramble for seats after two veteran MPs announced their retirements over the weekend.

Although there had been speculation that the party might stand down to make way for other seatless MPs, it now looks as if there will be selection battles in both areas.

The two who have decided, belatedly, to retire are Doug Hoyle, the MP for Warrington North and chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, and Norman Hogg, MP for Cambernald and Killyth.

Their seats appeared to fit neatly with the ambitions of Bryan Davies, Labour's higher education spokesman and MP for Oldham Central and Royton, and Mike Watson, member for Glasgow Central - both of whom have lost their seats because of boundary changes.

However, last night Mr Watson said that he would not stand for Mr Hogg's seat as there was a strong local candidate, and if Bryan Davies decides to stand for Mr Hoyle's seat he is likely to face competition.

Mr Hoyle, who has been in Parliament since 1979 and in Warrington seat since 1981, said yesterday that he thought it best to quit while he was

ahead. Now that a clear Labour victory seemed likely, he had to consider whether he really wanted another full term in Parliament. "I always think it is better to go when people still have a lot of respect for you," he said.

Mr Hoyle added that the party would begin the short-listing process this week, and although there would be no time for nominations from different branches - as is the normal custom - there should still be a one-member-one-vote ballot for his successor.

"It will be up to Bryan whether he puts his name in, but my view is that Warrington will make its own mind up. I can think of some very good people

on the local council," he said. Last night, Mr Davies said he had only just learnt of the vacancy and was not able to say whether he would apply.

However, Mr Watson said he would definitely not stand for Mr Hogg's seat. Although he would still like to return to Westminster, he said, he was also considering seeking a seat in a devolved Scottish parliament.

A likely candidate for Cambernald and Killyth is thought to be Rosemary McKenna, a former president of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, he said, adding: "If something came up I would consider it, but on balance this wasn't the right one for me."



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news

Still life with Jeffrey: How Lord Archer is playing to the gallery

Jojo Moyes

"I'm very aware that at my Christmas parties there are four groups," says Lord Archer. "Those who come for the view; those who come for the champagne and shepherd's pie and those who come for the pic-

tures." In the week it was revealed that he was to open his collection to the public to raise money for the Royal Academy, *The Independent*, placing itself firmly in the fourth category, was allowed a private view.

First in sight are the 70 political cartoons which grace Lord Archer's hallway, includ-

ing works by Ralph Steadman, Vicky, EH Shepherd and Gerald Scarfe, who has penned one particularly vicious portrait of Lady Thatcher. "I have to steer her past it like this," he says, demonstrating, "when she comes round."

Cartoons aside, Lord Archer's 13th-floor penthouse

on the Albert embankment overlooking the Houses of Parliament boasts more than 250 paintings by impressionists and 20th century artists. Against the cream, gold and black neo-classicist decor sit works by, amongst others, Miro, Picasso, Dufy, Matisse, Lowy and Vuillard.

Lord Archer's first painting was bought "on the King's Road outside Safeways" for £25. "I only had £35 in the bank so I was terrified of telling Mary, I've never told her since what I pay because she'd turn in her grave," he says. Lady Archer, who is, of course, very much alive, is unlikely to quibble too

much. As well as letting her "steal" the best ones for her study, Lord Archer had her immortalised in oils by Bryan Organ - as he points out, "that's who painted Prince Charles". One enormous Vuillard features a woman who looks uncannily like his wife. The artist is a favourite, he says. "I can't

afford Monet, Manet or Renoir so I decided to go for Pissarro, Vuillard and the like. It was a cash thing." The second division of impressionists? "Yes, but I'm trying to pick the best of the division."

Many paintings have been bought with the proceeds of his best-selling novels. Perhaps in recognition of this, on a coffee table, a stone's throw from a Henry Moore, sits a silver cigar case, made in the shape of one of his paperbacks, and embossed with the words: "Not A Penny More, Not A Penny Less".

Lord Archer has found many good bargains since his first purchases. One favourite came from Alan Bond's bankruptcy sale in Australia. He cannot resist showing another, which had an auction estimate of £25,000, but he managed to get for £2,000. When we have some trouble working out the name of the artist, he calls his dealer, who tells me: "I hear it was a special purchase." I say, Pause. "Every purchase is a special purchase," the dealer replies. Lord Archer knows the value of a good dealer. Since his first days as a supporter of the

"I can't afford Monet, Manet or Renoir, so I decided to go for Pissarro, and the like"

RA 30 years ago, when he bought his paintings "for £50", he has missed a couple of works through indecision. "I made some bad mistakes at first, I failed to pick up a wonderful Craigie Aitchison for £750. I went back a second day, a third day and it was sold." The ones that got away appear to haunt him. One sculpture he recently lost he described as "killing him".

The Royal Academy tours, due to take place on two days in May and June, are already heavily oversubscribed, and there will be no guests. But there are others who get regular viewings, he says, including the Camberwell Art School and many "serious artists". Those unable to see the real paintings may see his postcard reproductions.

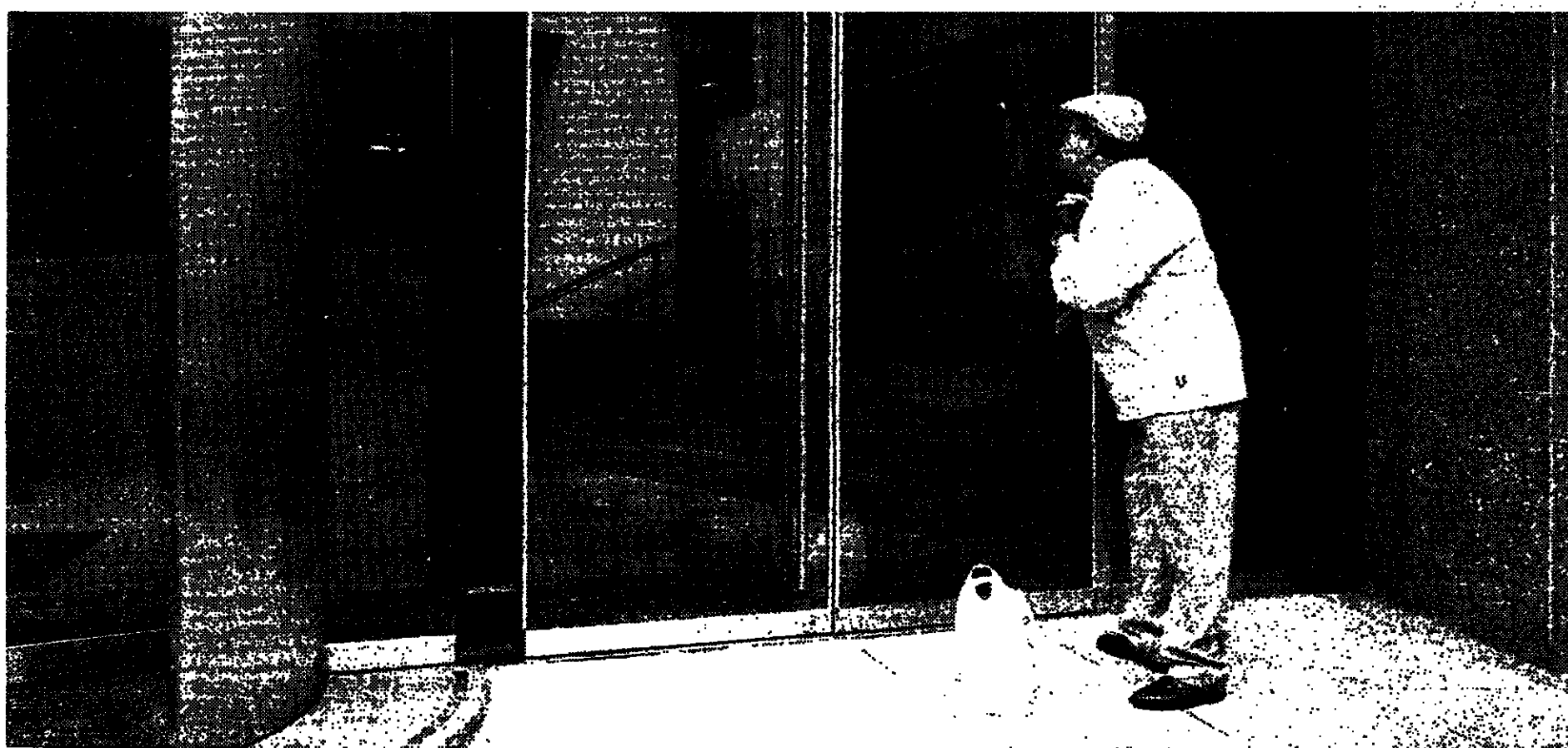
Despite his passion for art - "a drug" - Lord Archer is unlikely to have much time to spare over the coming weeks, during a campaign which he admits will be "a struggle". Curiously, the day before our visit he had joked, at a gallery opening, that pictures of John Major as prime minister were likely to be more valuable after the election. I am reminded of this as I notice a framed cartoon by Peter Brookes, positing the famous photograph of Harold Wilson as a child outside No 10 against a copy featuring Tony Blair. Why had he chosen this one? "For its historical significance," he replies.

Does that mean, I venture, that he thinks Mr Blair will win? For the first time that morning, Lord Archer fixes me with a steady glare. "Certainly not," he says. And the tour is over.



Broad canvas: Enzo Plazzotta's *Christ With Sinners* sits against the panoramic view from Lord Archer's 15th-floor penthouse. Photograph: Edward Styles

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DAILY POEM

September Song

By Christopher Logue

*Be not too hard for life is short
And nothing is given to man.
Be not too hard when he is sold and bought
For he must manage as best he can.
Be not too hard when he gladly dies
Defending things he does not own.
Be not too hard when he tells lies
And if his heart is sometimes like a stone.
Be not too hard, for soon he dies,
Often no wiser than he began.
Be not too hard for life is short
And nothing is given to man.*

All this week, Christopher Logue will be presenting the story of his life - from Paris pornographer and anti-nuclear activist to *Private Eye* columnist and translator of Homer - in his BBC Radio Three series *True Story*. The first 20-minute instalment is broadcast this evening at 9.55pm; subsequent programmes are at 9.35pm on Tuesday, 10.10 pm on Wednesday and 9.40pm on Thursday and Friday. "September Song" appears in Christopher Logue's *Selected Poems* (Faber & Faber).

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Israel braced for further suicide attacks

Patrick Cockburn
Jerusalem

As relations between Israel and the Palestinians deteriorate in the wake of the suicide bomb in Tel Aviv, the head of Israeli military intelligence said yesterday that he expected further suicide attacks because the Palestinian security services were not co-operating with Israeli intelligence.

General Moshe Yehalon, the head of Israeli military intelligence, said that at a series of meetings the Palestinian security forces had said they were "conditioning co-operation" on political concessions by Israel.

He said that Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other militant organisations believed they still had a "green light" from Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, to make further attacks.

Amid signs that security co-operation between Israel and the Palestinian leadership was breaking down - having survived four suicide bombs last year - General Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, the Israeli chief of

staff, said that Jibril Rajoub, the head of Palestinian security on the West Bank, was in practice fomenting riots in Hebron and Bethlehem, while nominally trying to suppress them.

Gen Yehalon said in a briefing last night that Palestinian security would only act against Hamas if ordered to do so by Mr Arafat. This order had yet to come. He said that at meetings with militant leaders after his return from the US on 9 March, Mr Arafat had given the impression that he would not object to military action against Israel.

The allegations of non-cooperation by Palestinian security contradict earlier statements that they were co-operating closely with Mr Rajoub.

As Israelis waited yesterday to see if there would be other bombs, the three women killed on Friday, Yael Gilad, 32, Anat Winter-Rosen, 31, and Michal Avrahami, 32, were buried in Tel Aviv. Meanwhile, the Israeli Cabinet was expected to suspend peace talks with the Palestinian Authority. These were already largely terminated by the Palestinians after Israel decided to build a Jewish settlement at Har Homa. David Bar-Ilan, the government's head of communications, said Israel wanted Mr Arafat to take tougher security measures. "Until we see some movement at this level there will be no talks," he said.

There was a third day of rioting in Hebron, where Israeli troops and Palestinian security men were trying to stop stone-throwing boys attacking a settlement of 400 Jews in the city



Watching brief: Settler children in fancy dress for the Jewish holiday of Purim guarded by Jewish soldiers in Hebron yesterday. Photograph: AP

centre. In Bethlehem two Palestinians were shot and wounded by border guards when they ran away from a checkpoint.

Among those Israel wants arrested is Ibrahim Maqademeh, the Hamas leader recently released from jail, who told a rally of several thousand Hamas supporters in Khan Younis in Gaza on the day of the bombing that holy warriors "should

blow up enemies of Allah to stop the bulldozers of Netanyahu." Speaking of Har Homa, Mr Arafat, who is attending a conference of 54 Islamic states in Pakistan, said:

"We were surprised by the Israeli decision to isolate and Judaize Jerusalem."

Gen Yehalon said Israel, having withdrawn from parts of Gaza and the West Bank, needed the co-operation of Palestinian intelligence. Mr Arafat's most powerful card has always been security co-operation and, if Israeli allegations are true, he has decided to show that Israel

cannot do without it. Earlier, Avigdor Kahalani, the Internal Security Minister, made a surprisingly optimistic statement after meeting Jibril Rajoub, the head of Palestinian Preventive Security on the West Bank, saying: "There is going to be an open line between Jibril Rajoub and my office and even myself."

Mahmoud Abed el Kader Rammat, 28, the suicide bomber, had a different background from previous bombers and may have been chosen for this reason, to lull suspicions. Living in the village of Zurif, near Hebron, he was a father of four and had a regular job. Previous bombers have been younger, unemployed and unmarried.

People who knew the bomber said he was "a quiet guy", known to be a supporter of Hamas, but not very active. He had been arrested four times since the start of the Palestinian intifada in 1987. He had worked in the kitchens of restaurants in Rishon LeZion and the outskirts of Tel Aviv and slept in one of them on the night before he took the bus to Tel Aviv to blow himself up.

Moshe Zanzuri, the owner of the Formaggio restaurant in Rishon LeZion, was arrested during the weekend for questioning about Rammat, who used to work for him.

It is unclear whether Rammat was one of 57,000 Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank with a permit to work in Israel, or one of tens of thousands of illegal workers.

Meanwhile, Israeli security services are now seeking to demolish Rammat's house in Zurif village, where a 24-hour curfew has been imposed.

Mobutu returns for 'unity'

Agencies

Zaire's ailing President Mobutu Sese Seko stepped back into public view yesterday and said his response to rebels fighting to topple him would be known in the next 48 hours.

Mr Mobutu, looking tired and thin but walking unaided, earlier told reporters he had returned to devote himself to Zaire's higher interests, not his own.

In his first public appearance since returning from France on Friday, the President told journalists: "I am Mobutu. I have returned not to devote myself to Mobutu's interests or Mobutu's fortune as you write

from time to time but to the higher interests of Zaire. That is to say our unity, our territorial integrity."

Asked about his plans, he replied: "In the next 48 hours you will know."

He received a letter from President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, an attempt by Mr Mandela to broker peace between Mr Mobutu and the rebels. Mr Mandela's deputy, Thabo Mbeki, who delivered the letter, said afterwards that a United Nations peace plan for a truce and talks was at the heart of efforts to end the five-month-old civil war. Aides to Mr Mbeki said Mr Mobutu had promised a reply soon.

Laurent Kabila, the rebel leader, called on Saturday for a transitional government but said he would not work with anyone who had shared power with Mr Mobutu. He said the government should include his Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire and only anti-Mobutists and anti-regime people who have never been in power and who never shared power.

As the situation deteriorates, Western governments are preparing to evacuate their nationals. The first wave of a United States military task force moved cautiously into central Africa yesterday. A C-17 transport plane from Aviano in Italy

flew a contingent of mostly officers - along with equipment - to Brazzaville in Congo, just across the river from Kinshasa, the Zairean capital. The US, which has about 500 citizens in Zaire, is deploying troops in Brazzaville and in Libreville, the capital of neighbouring Gabon.

The French have had a task force in Brazzaville for several weeks and a task force from Belgium was expected there today. A small advance team from Britain is also in place.

Belgian media estimate the number of Westerners in the Zairean capital at about 7,000, including fewer than 3,000 Belgians, about 1,000 French, 500 Britons and 650 Americans.

A small nation with a brave past - and an image problem

HELSENKI DAYS

Ah ha, I thought. A Finn who has finally fouled up. A Finn in a fix.

With a deadline looming, I had been trying to get into my hotel room, but the blasted plastic digger that passed for a key no longer worked. After three fruitless days in Helsinki, at last there was a chance for a little outrage, a spot of fist-thumping, a small speech, perhaps, about customer's rights.

You see, it's an addiction for those of us who live in Moscow. Go more than a few days without a gripe about the impossibility of life - the pollution, the pot-holes, the prices - and you start entering consumer cold turkey, jittering with irritation at having nothing to moan about.

The impeccably-mannered young man behind the desk of the Radisson-SAS hotel was as cool and calm as the blue spring sky outside. "Our mistake," he said, snapping my plastic card in half. "Here's a new one." It was all over in 15 seconds; there was no time to fire off an insult, let alone to demand a humble anteeksi (Finnish for "sorry, pardon").

Not long ago, Time magazine conducted a survey on the adjectives most frequently used to describe inhabitants of the smaller nations. Finland's five million population were

deemed to be "plucky". It was a tribute to their history of sharing a border with a giant bullying neighbour, and especially to their courageous defence against Stalin's invading troops in the winter war of 1939-40.

But they could also have been called hyper-efficient and - at least on the surface - unerringly calm. Several decades of organising world summits has earned Finland an unchallenged reputation as the planet's butlers, who discreetly attend to the needs of fractious and capricious superpowers.

Last week's two-day summit between presidents Clinton and Yeltsin was a fine example. Thousands of journalists, officials and others (including a free-market-minded group of protesters from St Petersburg) descended on Helsinki.

The world's journalists, with their demands for instant information and five-star treatment, are not easy guests, as anyone with experience of the whitening White House press corps would testify. Yet this neat little city, perched on the northern edge of the Gulf of Finland,

carried on working like clockwork. We were even allowed to travel free on the trains.

Much of this was simply a question of technology. This was the first cyber-summit. Key moments, from press conferences to Mr Clinton's undignified arrival in an airline catering truck, were instantaneously downloaded onto the Internet.

Within seconds, you could not only watch video footage of the US president on one of the many computers provided at the Helsinki press centres, but you could also - by clicking on a mouse - fast forward or rewind to whichever exonerating moment you wanted. It seemed to catch on; the Finnish state broadcaster, YLE, said that its home page had a "colossal" 55,000 visits.

For the Finns, it also served another purpose. For there is another side to their international reputation which they want to erase: they are, if the truth be told, sometimes thought to be... how can I put this tactfully?.. Stolid, dull, a little on the lumpy side, perhaps.

Last week Finland seized the

chance to fight back. Its Internet site was packed with information aimed at proving that the country amounts to more than just saunas and saunas. Net surfers were bombarded with facts aimed at overhauling the world view of the Finn. There was information about the Finnish Woman, who appears to be forging ahead in the fight for equality; she holds 68 seats in the 200-strong parliament, as well as the posts of foreign minister and mayor of Helsinki.

You could read about a strange Finnish New Year's custom in which farmers throw molten metal into cold water, and then study the shadow thrown by the resulting shape. There were details of the cuisine ("Bread - Still a Favourite"), of their love of the mobile telephone (more per head than any other country in the planet), or their Palm Sunday practice of lashing their friends with willow twigs.

It won't work, of course. The world will go on teasing the Finns, just as it will the Belgians, and the Irish. Perhaps it's to do with the size of the country. Perhaps it's their weird-sounding language. But the Finns have at least proved one point: they are definitely plucky.

Phil Reeves

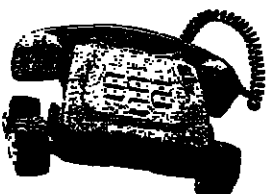
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Dutch to unveil plan for multi-speed EU

Sarah Helm
Brussels

Detailed plans for a single European policy on immigration and judicial matters and an end to internal border checks will be unveiled this week, opening the way for the biggest transfer of power to Brussels since the Maastricht Treaty.

For the first time, new draft texts make clear that policy on immigration and asylum will not only be harmonised, but brought directly under the control of the European Union's institutions.

The proposals, to be presented by the Dutch government, which holds the EU presidency, also set out rules for an opt-out for countries which are opposed. The offer is specifically directed at Britain which is refusing to end border checks.

The plans also give the first firm proposals for a mechanism to create a multi-speed Europe, allowing countries which want to pool powers faster than others to do so. Such a plan, known as "flexible" decision-making, is strongly opposed by Britain, which fears the creation of a hard-core Europe from which it would be excluded.

European foreign ministers will discuss the plans when they meet in Rome on Tuesday to mark the 40th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, which set up what is now the European Union. The draft proposals also examine how to create common policies in defence and foreign affairs and seek to establish more majority voting.

The Dutch government is unveiling its proposals just three months before the Amsterdam summit, when the new treaty is expected to be signed. The Dutch appear determined to press for early agreement on the text, despite the pending British election which is preventing British negotiators from taking any decisions.

EU leaders will be hoping for a harmonious Rome meeting but are certain to find that Britain stands in opposition to the integration plans.

Not only does the Government disagree with many elements of the draft text, but the plans could also bring confrontation with Labour, should Tony Blair win the election.

The Dutch are already proposing a mini summit with Mr Blair on 12 May in order to ensure that the Labour leader would have time to sign the Amsterdam treaty on 17 June, should he be elected.

Although many of the proposals outlined by the Dutch are far-reaching, their implementation remains many years away. The most significant plan is the scheme giving the EU the right to make laws on immigration, asylum and internal EU security.

Most member states accept that immigration into the community can only be controlled by joint action. Even Denmark, which has an opt-out from justice policy-sharing, is considering whether to accept the new proposals in the wake of rising asylum figures.

If internal checks are to be abolished, member states believe it is essential that the EU takes compensating measures, toughening its external "ring fence" in order to deter people entering from outside.

The European Commission should in future have powers to propose laws on a common EU visa regime and common rules for reception of immigrants and asylum-seekers. The European Court of Justice in Luxembourg would for the first time oversee implementations of legislation in this area.



Battle lines drawn: Police clash with demonstrators during a Day of Freedom rally in Minsk, the Belarus capital, yesterday. About 10,000 people took part in the anti-government march and there were 3,000 arrests. Photograph: AP

significant shorts

Papuan PM defies rebel soldiers' deadline

Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister, Sir Julius Chan, stood firm at the weekend and refused to resign before tomorrow's deadline, which has been set by rebel soldiers who want him to resign over his planned use of mercenaries against insurgents on the island of Bougainville. Australia's Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, said that the country's defence forces had been upgraded to a higher degree of readiness as a result of the crisis in Papua New Guinea. **Reuters - Port Moresby**

Albanians over a barrel

Bashkim Fino, the Albanian Prime Minister, warned at the weekend that his coalition government may not be able to deliver on a key promise: elections by June. Voters could not be expected to cast ballots under the barrel of a gun, Mr Fino said. **AP - Tirana**

More grisly finds in Belgium

Belgian police said that they had found remains from at least three bodies, probably women, in 10 plastic rubbish bags in the southern town of Cuesmes. In separate, apparently unrelated find in the western village of Merelbeke, the skull of an elderly man was found in a plastic bag. **Reuters - Brussels**

Five die in cult-house fire

Five people were found dead in a mysterious blaze at a house in Canada which was owned by a doomsday cult that has been involved in a number of suicides and murders. The bodies of three women and two men were found in a house in rural Quebec owned by the Solar Temple sect. **Reuters - Montreal**

Colombo's vote of confidence

The Sri Lankan government's sweeping win in local elections held on Friday will help the administration to push ahead with a plan to end the separatist war being waged by Tamil Tiger rebels, analysts said. President Chandrika Kumaratunga's People's Alliance coalition swept to a landslide victory. **Reuters - Colombo**

Mexican party sent packing

Mexico's opposition humbled the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in the state of Morelos, stripping the PRI of majority control of the state congress, final results at the weekend showed. **Reuters - Mexico City**

Paw landing

Jeff Lyons thought the bump when he landed his plane was a pothole - he did not realise he had run over his golden retriever, Jazz, who suffered a broken leg and gashed back. "I've seen a lot of dogs run over by cars, but never a plane," a vet, Luke Lipham, said. **AP - Carrollton, Georgia**

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international

China focuses on next great prize – Taiwan

Teresa Poole
Peking

The hottest selling item at Peking's state-owned Friendship Store these days is a triumphalist 1997 fridge magnet, showing two happy pandas painting the red Chinese flag on top of a Union flag. Another magnet shows a gloomy British bulldog, suitcases in hand, boarding a British flight out while a panda waves him off.

Patriotic fridge magnets aside, the countdown in China started in earnest at the stroke of midnight on Saturday as the electronic clock in Tiananmen Square clicked to show exactly 100 days to go. A group of about 200 students bused in from the People's University dutifully broke into song and waved flags in front of the clock, making up with enthusiasm what they lacked in spontaneity. And last night the main television station broadcast the final of a nationwide quiz show in which mainlanders have competed against each other to demonstrate their extraordinary knowledge of Hong Kong trivia.

China's obsession with sov-

erignty, and the inviolable nature of the "motherland", has for months fuelled a surge in patriotic propaganda. Even the hard-line Prime Minister, Li Peng, reportedly thinks the handover might justify lifting the normal ban on fireworks in Peking.

Yet this is one subject on which there is little gap between the official propaganda and the perceptions of ordinary Chinese. "There is a genuine patriotic sense that China is healing itself, that it is righting a historical wrong," said one Western diplomat. The British, and the possibility that they might have played some part in Hong Kong's success, have been written out of the official script. In a statement to mark the "100 Days to Go" milestone, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, Cui Tiankai, last week declared: "Over the past 100 years, Hong Kong Chinese built Hong Kong into an international trade, financial and shipping centre, with the special diligence and intelligence of the Chinese people." No mention of any benefits of 150 years of British administration.

From an early age, Chinese

schoolchildren are drilled in the heinous crimes of the British during the Opium Wars, and the unequal treaties which stole part of the motherland. A view of almost a priori sovereign rights is well absorbed, whether the territory in question is Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang or the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. All are deemed "inalienable" parts of China.

China's Defence Minister, Chi Haotian, recently urged the country to "make full use of this historic opportunity and mobilise the whole nation for education in patriotism and national defence". Such sentiments explain why there is unease in Hong Kong at a statement this month by Qian Qichen, the Chinese Foreign Minister, that school textbooks in the territory which do not confirm to China's "principles" will have to be "revised". As far as China is concerned, history is written by the sovereign power.

After 1 July, Hong Kong will become another Chinese "internal affair" in which other countries are not allowed to "interfere". Technically, under the Sino-British Joint Declaration

on Hong Kong's transfer, Britain still has a monitoring role through the Sino-British Joint Liaison Group which will exist, and will continue to meet, until 1 January 2000. The Joint De-

claration is also registered at the United Nations as an international agreement, one which pledges that the "one country, two systems" arrangement will last for 50 years. In practice,

however, there is little scope for formal international sanction of China if things go wrong. For Peking, the spotlight of sovereign ambition will, after 1 July, shift to the recovery of

Macau in 1999, and more importantly to Taiwan. Macau is far less of a trophy than Hong Kong. After the 1974 change of government in Portugal, Lisbon wanted to give Macau back to China, but Peking insisted that nothing could be given back which had not been taken away. Unlike Hong Kong's New Territories, there was never a formal treaty for Macau, so 20 December 1999 was arbitrarily fixed as the time when this corner of Chinese territory would be removed from "Portuguese administration". That date will mark an end to foreign government of claimed Chinese territory.

Taiwan is a different matter. Since the beginning of this year, all the main speeches by Chinese leaders have spoken of how, after Hong Kong is reunited with the motherland, it should be the turn of Taiwan, still formally considered a rene-

gade province by Peking. In his funeral address for Deng Xiaoping, President Jiang Zemin said: "The Taiwan question will be settled eventually and the complete reunification of the motherland will certainly be achieved." The Prime Minister in his annual state of the nation report this month, said: "The reunification of the motherland is an irreversible historical trend, and any attempt at splitting China, or at the secession of Taiwan from China will meet with the firm opposition of the entire Chinese people, including compatriots in Taiwan."

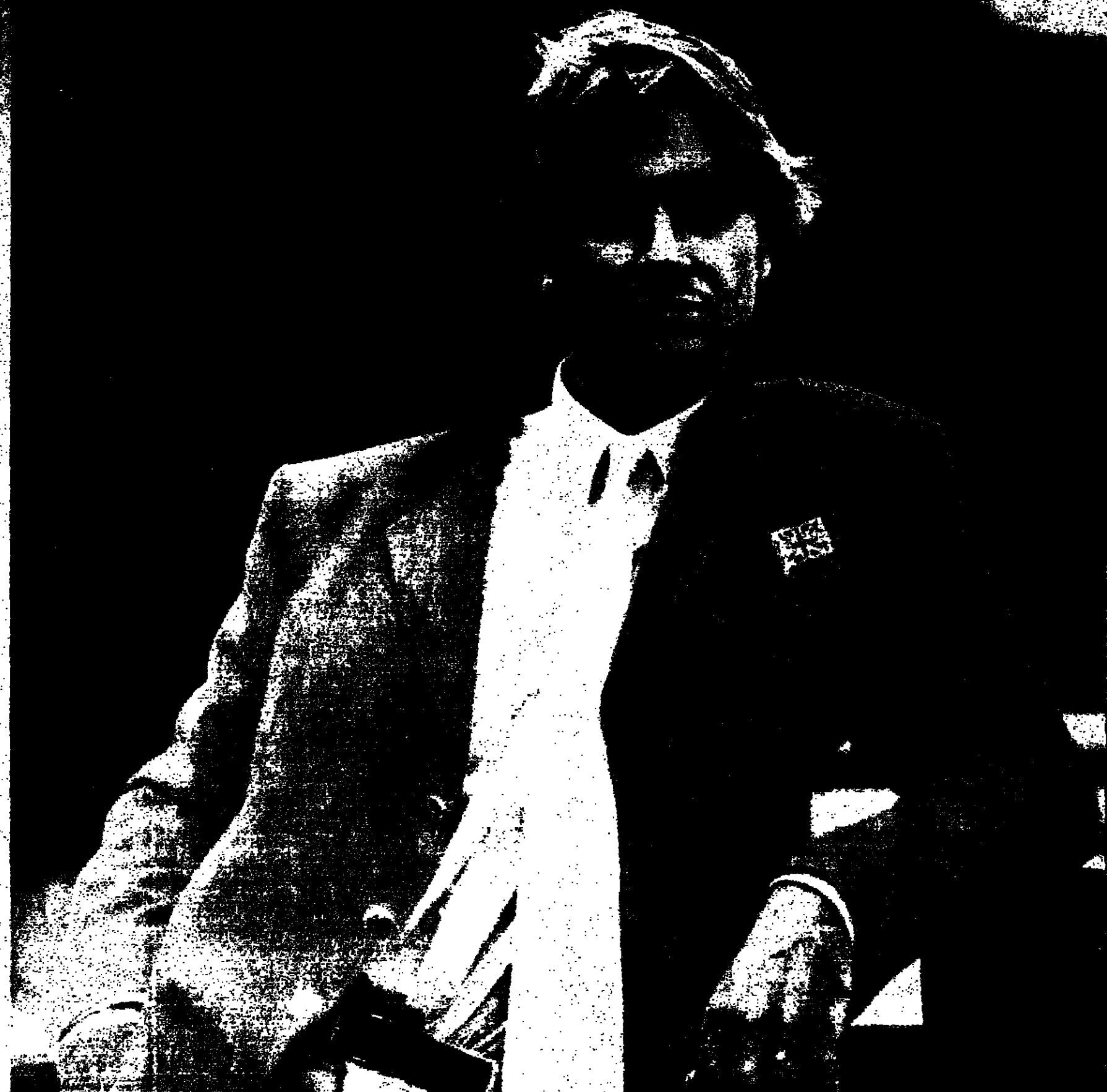
Those Taiwan compatriots will be among the people most keenly watching developments in Hong Kong after 1 July with every expectation that the reality of "one country, two systems" will not tempt them towards reunification with the Communist-run mainland.



Colony's kin: A Peking family waving Hong Kong's post-handover flag in front of the 'Countdown clock' in Tiananmen Square

Photograph: Reuters

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Funding row taints Gore's visit to Asia

Rupert Cornwell
Washington

Almost certainly, China is the last place Vice-President Al Gore would like to be right now. But once made, diplomatic schedules are not easily unmade – and so it is that the man described as the ruthless "Solicitor-in-Chief" of Democratic campaign donations last year arrives tonight in the country that stands accused of trying to subvert United States politics in those same elections of 1996.

Mr Gore's trip to East Asia was to have been another building block for a White House run of his own in 2000, paving the way for an exchange of official visits between Presidents Bill Clinton and Jiang Zemin. It was intended as a step towards a new relationship between the world's most powerful country and its most populous, but missing his own foreign policy credentials in the process.

Alas for such well-laid plans. Washington's vaunted strategy of "constructive engagement" with Peking lies half-crushed by the spreading campaign finance scandal here, of which China's alleged efforts to channel money to Democratic candidates in 1996 are the most serious single component.

In political Washington, "China" is probably the dirtiest word around. A host of issues, from human rights to Taiwan to trade, have been exacerbated by the row.

While the Chinese government itself adamantly denies any wrongdoing, even if Peking did allocate \$2m (£1.25m) for the purpose (as has been claimed), neither the FBI nor the Congressional committees probing the affair have produced evidence that donations were actually made. But Mr Gore's dilemma is none the less for that.

Normally, the signing of a huge commercial jet order is just the sort of occasion an ambitious politician like Mr Gore would never miss. This time though the Vice-President considered skipping the ceremony for a Chinese purchase of \$1.5bn worth of Boeing 777s, given the rampant anti-China mood in Washington. Now seems he will attend. "If the deal is ready".

The fundraising row, the Vice President declared as he

left on Saturday for a first stop in Tokyo, "is not what this trip is about", and indeed considerations of diplomacy would argue for the topic to be avoided. But for his own credibility, he cannot be seen to softshuttle the issue – while Washington must be doubly wary of any concession that might be construed as having been bought by political donations from Peking.

Nowhere are strains greater than over trade. America's record \$19bn merchandise deficit in January was in good measure due to a 40 per cent surge that month in import from China, which is on the point of overtaking Japan as owner of the largest single trade surplus with the US.

Hitherto, the argument in Washington has mainly been over linking Peking's human rights performance with the annual extension of its most favoured nation trading status. But the ballooning deficit raises questions over Peking's still more cherished goal of entry into the Geneva-based World Trade Organisation.

Even before the latest trade



Al Gore: Cannot be seen to softshuttle the issue

figures, the anti-China lobby here had been trying to make US approval of China's admission into the WTO conditional on a vote in Congress. Now Mr Gore will carry the message the China must get rid of its tariff and non-tariff barriers to imports from the US, and else where if its goods are to enjoy the lower-tariff benefits of WTO membership. The trade imbalance was "unsustainable" for the long-term health of the US economy, said Nancy Pelosi, the California Congresswoman and one of China's harshest critics on Capitol Hill.

Hong Kong 香港 handover

Silent protests as sun begins to set

Stephen Vines
Hong Kong

Chris Patten, the Governor of Hong Kong, yesterday warned those who will run the colony after it returns to Chinese sovereignty not to tinker with the existing system of government. He said that Hong Kong was like a Rolls Royce. "I don't quite see the point of lifting the bonnet to tinker with the engine," he maintained that the territory needed governing "with a light touch".

The start of the last hundred days of British rule was marked yesterday with triumphalist celebrations in both the colony and Peking. But Britain and China remain locked in disagreement over arrangements for the transition of power. Negotiations which ended last week failed to even agree arrangements for the advance stationing of Chinese troops in the colony.

In Hong Kong, thousands of people took part in a series of events to mark the landmark day, while in China, students gathered under the clock in Peking's Tiananmen Square which counts down the seconds until the handover of power. As the clock hit the 100-days mark, they chanted: "Come home, Hong Kong".

Thousands of school children were mobilised in the territory to take part in a symbolic "run to the motherland". Others participated in tree-planting ceremonies and watched lion dances. A television opinion poll showed that 63 per cent of those interviewed were confident about the return to Chinese rule although a larger number expressed doubts over the long-term future.

Tung Chee-hwa, who will head the first post-colonial government, went out of his way to stress that his priorities were things like housing and care for the elderly as opposed to wider political issues. Zhou Nan, director of the Xinhua news agency, or China's de facto mission in Hong Kong, said Peking had faith in the abilities of the post-colonial regime. "The central government places great trust in the future Hong Kong government. I think all sectors in Hong Kong should give their full support," he said in an interview with a local Cantonese-language station.

In Peking, the People's Daily newspaper devoted much of its front page to the historic occasion and the role played in it by the nation's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, who died last month aged 92 before he could see his dream fulfilled. "At this moment we think even more fondly of Deng Xiaoping," it said.

In Hong Kong, a handful of demonstrators, their mouths taped shut in what they said was a symbol of things to come, took up position in Victoria Park, waving placards to silently condemn China's violent military crackdown at Tiananmen Square in 1989.

Meanwhile Mr Patten and Martin Lee, leader of the Democratic Party, the colony's largest party, welcomed the initiative taken by The Independent in bringing back to life "The World of Lily Wong", a political cartoon strip which was abruptly terminated in May 1995 by the South China Morning Post, the colony's largest English-language newspaper.

The death of Lily Wong, created by the Hong Kong-based cartoonist Larry Feign, was widely seen as an indication of growing Chinese influence over the colony's media. The strip will be appearing in The Independent until June 30, the last day of British rule. Welcoming the reappearance of the strip, Mr Patten said: "like a lot of other people in Hong Kong, I used to follow the world of Lily Wong every day. I really missed her when, for whatever reason, she disappeared from our lives about two years ago. I am glad to hear she is making a comeback in Britain".

In and out guide to the new society

IN Amnesia: It is neither fashionable nor necessary to have the ability to recall who were pillars of the colonial establishment and how they have become stairways of the new order. The Island Club: A discrete enclave owned by the family of Tung Chee-hwa, the head of the first post-colonial government. Invitations are at a premium. Things Chinese: Well, up to a point. Hongkongers are still sniffy about their compatriots from across the border, but nowadays keep their tart comments to themselves and profess a great love for the motherland. Committees: Anyone who's anyone is a member of a Chinese advisory committee. Fortunately there are loads of them and so scope for gaining membership is not too limited. Colonial memorabilia: Everything, from letter boxes with the royal crest to stamps with the Queen's head, is being avidly hoarded. Interestingly, some of the keenest buyers live on the Chinese mainland. Optimism: The glorious return to the Motherland is an occasion for celebration. Things can only get better once the colonial shackles are removed. Chinese values: The new buzz phrase is Chinese values, a sort of Confucian-Communist melange, with an emphasis on the values of obedience, community interest and respect for authority, as opposed to individual interest. **OUT** Long memories: Too much was said by Hong Kong leaders in the past which can no longer be said at present. The facility of recall is not required by the new order. Government House: Applicants used to queue up for invitations to enter the residence of Governor Chris Patten. Invites are now a positive embarrassment. Things British: Those with British connections are doing their best to keep them under wraps. Various privileges, including special immigration rights, which were enjoyed by Brits have been scrapped. Gongs, MBES, CBES, OBEs and all other royal awards were once eagerly coveted. Now some aspirants for high office have gone so far as to relinquish use of their titles. Colonialism: Regarding colonial memorabilia as anything but quaint history is out. The new order wants to rewrite school text books to ensure that children have a "correct" understanding of the past. Pessimism: Those expressing doubts about the future have been warned. There is no place for doubters who go round spread despondency. Western values: These are defined by the new order as a combination of anarchism, welfare state-ism and unfettered freedom to criticise for the sake of criticising - an intriguing mixture of Haight-Ashbury and Clement Attlee. Cantonese: The mother tongue of most Hong Kong people is not exactly out since that is what most people speak, but it cannot be regarded as politically correct.

Stephen Vines

People's Army general tackles military details

Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent and Stephen Vines

The head of the largest army on earth, the 2-million strong People's Liberation Army of China, is in Britain today on the first visit of its kind since the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 soured relations between China and the West.

General Fu Quanyou, China's Chief of the General Staff, will this morning see Mike Portillo, the Secretary of State for Defence, and the Chief of Defence Staff, Field Marshal Sir Peter Inge. This afternoon he will visit the Foreign Office.

The Ministry of Defence yesterday refused to say why the general was visiting but the timing of the visit and his conversations with Mr Portillo and Field Marshal Inge indicate he will be discussing the transfer of authority for the security of Hong Kong from the British Armed Forces to the PLA, exact details of which still have not been worked out, senior defence sources said last week.

The last-but-one round of talks in the Anglo-Chinese Joint Liaison Group (JLIG), the diplomatic body handling Hong Kong's return to China, failed last week to agree arrangements for the advance stationing of Chinese troops in the colony.

Britain's chief negotiator, Hugh Davies, said the failure of three days of talks, the 39th round in 15-year-long negotiations, was especially "disappointing".

China also expressed regret at the lack of agreement. Hong Kong's China-backed Wai Wo Po newspaper reported on Saturday that defence matters were one key area of outstanding problems, along with Vietnamese asylum-seekers, of whom 6,000 are left in the colony, and the transfer of Hong Kong government files.

"We are now in the crucial stage of the process," Mr Davies said in a statement. "We need to close the remaining gaps." The Chinese, delegation blamed Britain for the lack of progress. "The Chinese side has made the greatest possible effort to accommodate the concerns of the British side, but the British side is still adopting disappointing delaying tactics and trying to establish linkage between unrelated issues," said China's ambassador to London, Zhao Jihua, who heads the Chinese delegation.

On an advance guard of Chinese troops, Mr Davies said the two sides had narrowed their differences but had been unable to reach agreement. "Britain has long taken the position that some advance parties are a good idea," he said. "The problems lie in the size of those parties and the timing of their arrival."

General Fu Quanyou, who arrived in London on Saturday, begins a series of regional visits tomorrow, designed to acquaint him with British Army equipment and training. Born in 1930, the general joined the PLA in 1946 and served as an infantry officer. He was commander of the Chengdu military region, facing India, which merged with the Kunming military region, facing Burma, Laos and Vietnam, in the mid-1980s. He became a general in 1993. He has been Chief of the General Staff since September 1995.



Eye of empire: Members of the Black Watch waiting for six o'clock to change before lowering the flags at the cenotaph in central Hong Kong. The colony will be handed over to China on 1 July. Photograph: Tom Pileton

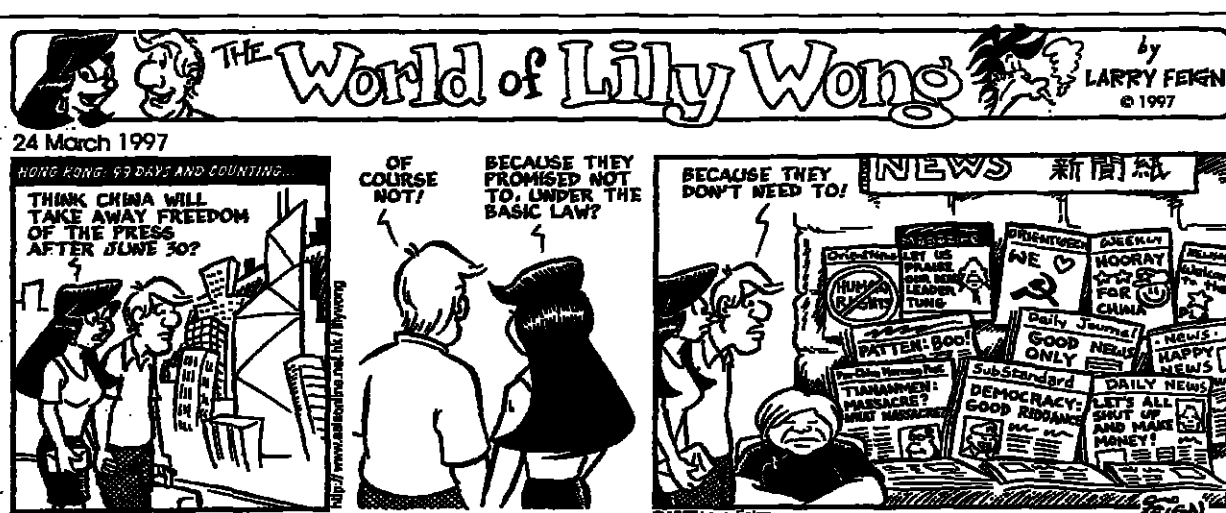
No holds barred in cartoon swan song

Jojo Moyes
Hong Kong

There is nothing obvious that marks Lily Wong as a threat to national security. The civil-service secretary, who lives with her American husband and her baby in a tiny flat in Kowloon, could be said to live the life of any number of Hong Kong Chinese women. She loves her family, moans about pollution, cares about her appearance and drives a hard bargain. Yet almost two years ago the cartoon character was killed off, an apparent victim of her newspaper's determination not to upset the Chinese government as the handover drew near.

Because despite her innocuous lifestyle, "The World of Lily Wong" of the East, always made political waves in Hong Kong. For eight years the strip poked fun at East-West relations as well as at Deng Xiaoping and the People's Liberation Army. Hong Kong Democrat Martin Lee described it as depicting "with sometimes devastating accuracy the foibles of the Hong Kong and Chinese governments, Hong Kong's political classes and ordinary Hong Kong people".

That was my brief, to sail close to the wind, says the cartoon's creator, Larry Feign. A 41-year-old American, Feign came to Hong Kong in 1985 and



created Lily soon after. He has frequently been asked whether Lily was based on the Chinese wife, Cathy, but denies this. "Anything coming from Lily Wong comes from me," he says. Lily had started as a satire on Hong Kong life, but John Dux, Feign's first editor at the South China Morning Post in Hong Kong, encouraged the cartoonist to be overtly political. "He used to tell me, 'make it meaner, make it nastier. If you're not getting at least one hate letter a day you're not doing your job'". The first signs that this freedom might change came in

1989, when, Feign says, he was asked to "go easier" on China. The following week's cartoons, which dealt with pro-China, anti-democracy business people in Hong Kong, required a certain amount of "clearance" before printing. But it was in May 1995, prior to publication of a strip which dealt with the use of executed prisoners' organs for transplant, that Feign found his contract abruptly terminated, in a decision widely believed to be political.

The South China Morning Post's editor-in-chief, David Armstrong, ascribed his decision to cost-cutting, despite the obvious profitability of the newspaper (one of the most profitable in the world). Feign promptly offered to continue at a lower rate but this was declined. "No one ever wanted to rock the boat in Hong Kong but it's worse than ever. I figured all along that Lily Wong would be cancelled, but I was surprised by the timing and the [way in] which it was done," he says. Since then sources at the Post have said the cartoon was "unpopular" - a charge Feign rebuts, pointing to the continuing sales of Lily compilation

books. "In Hong Kong English-language books tend to be considered 'best sellers' if you manage to sell over 2,000. My best-selling Lily Wong book sold 24,000. I have 11 books out, still all in print, still doing well," he says. "Without Lily Wong in the paper I thought the interest would die, but it's really heartening for me to know people still enjoy her." It is just as well for Feign that his books do well, since the strip was dropped he has not been able to get work as a graphic artist within the territory. "Since Lily Wong left print I've been

doing freelance illustration for books and corporate stuff, illustrating books mostly. I'm increasingly involved in the World Wide Web.

"But I don't actually do anything for anyone here. I've been blacklisted across the board. I can't even find commercial work for company newsletters because they're so scared of having this 'notorious anti-Communist' even remotely connected with their company. Which is so absurd but that's the way it is. That's the state of mind here."

Feign does not know where his future lies after 1 July. But until then The Independent is helping him to resurrect Lily Wong for the 100 days up to the handover. It will be her swan song, and out of the confines of her natural environment, she can be as irreverent and as political as in her heyday. A prospect the cartoonist relishes. "A political cartoonist in a civilised country can be quite influential, can really raise the hackles of people in power. Look at Steve Bell and John Major's underpants, or the members of the Bush family who stated publicly how much they hated Doonesbury. I've missed Lily. She'll be in the limelight for three months which is exciting for me," he says. "In fact I'll be more free than I was. I won't pull any punches."

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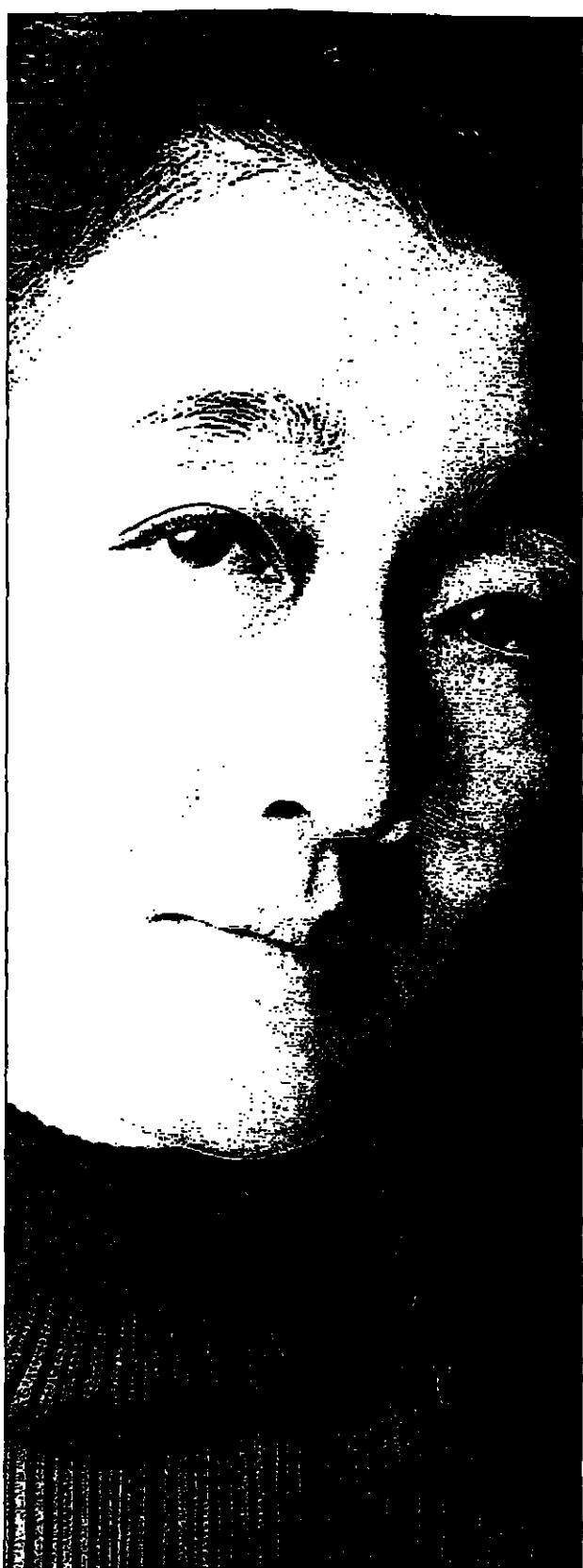
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Japan's strange, exotic bird: Mitsuko Uchida

Taking as long as it takes

'What's the hurry' might well be Mitsuko Uchida's motto. As with tea-making, so with music. It's all in the preparation. And it all leads to perfection. By Edward Seckerson

First the tea-making ritual. A little something carried over from her Japanese heritage. Darjeeling First Flush (the chosen blend) is meticulously measured into an empty muslin teabag, the filtered water boiled but gently cooled between jug and teapot. Then the infusion. Four minutes, precisely. After three minutes, "it's too much of a wake-up tea," after five, "already, too bitter." So, four minutes. Choose cup (size first, then colour), remove teabag, dispose. Serve. Enjoy.

And as with tea, so with music. Preparing it, sharing it, takes time. Patience. This is Mitsuko Uchida. Precise, uncompromising, passionate. The tea-making ritual – with its studied but enthusiastic commentary – will have been repeated many times for other visitors, but each time will be the first time. The favour of the tea depends upon it. Knowing just how much care has been lavished on its preparation only adds to the enjoyment. Uchida knows that. She can make an occasion of the simplest task. She has presence. A quality. And that quality is mirrored in her piano playing.

So, how to define it? Words won't really suffice, though we can try a few: supple, rapt, searching, dream-like. But volatile, too. You see it in her manner, you catch it in her conversation. One moment she will be quiet, confidential, almost conspiratorial – as if sharing the secrets of the universe with you alone. The words will be carefully considered, sparingly used, a series of portentous *haikus* separated by equally portentous silences. But then something will be said, something implied, to excite her, provoke her, and the new idea will detonate with such force that every word is suddenly an exclamation. So she thinks and speaks rather as she plays – a familiar trait among musicians but more pronounced in her case – and she plays in such a way as to persuade you that every phrase is precisely as you would choose to play it were you to do so. That's rare.

Uchida has just emerged from a period of "hibernation". No public performances, only private ones. This is a biannual occurrence. For two two-month periods every year she accepts no engagements. It's true that every second summer she'll take off to the Marlboro Festival in Vermont, there to make chamber music "just for the sheer hell of it", but working vacations are generally spent tucked up in her little meow house off the Portobello Road, taking stock, recharging the batteries, learning new repertoire. Her shortlist of priorities currently reads: the Brahms and Bartok Second Concertos, the Chopin Preludes, the Beethoven Diabelli and the Bach Goldberg Variations and the 48 Preludes and Fugues (to be ready in time for her 70th birthday in the year 2018), and the Ligeti Concerto. While "slaving" over the Birtwistle Concerto a couple of years back she decided that she would learn at least one major contemporary piece every three years. Maybe open a few ears.

She loves these sabbaticals "at home". They are so much a part of what she is about: a balanced, orderly existence with time to think, time to dream. And London is home. As witness her unshakeable allegiance to "Marks & Sparks" (the English colloquialisms slip deliciously, eccentrically, into her conversation). She begrudges time spent travelling. A typical day in the life of Mitsuko Uchida begins slowly. She gets up "slowly" (her intonation tells you just how slowly). A first cup of tea (prepared, of course, as above), then back and forth to bed with mail or newspapers. Then brunch – "only a bite, because otherwise your energies go into digestion" (before a concert she'll enjoy a single Benetton bittermint) – a quick glance at "Modesty Blaise" in the *Evening Standard*, a hand or two of bridge (don't look for reason in the apparent incongruities here), and off across the courtyard on the short walk to her studio where two Steinway

concert grands – her own – await.

Right now she's preparing for her Barlican Celebrity Recital on Wednesday. A typical Uchida programme, it opens, like the proverbial floodgates, with the Berg Sonata, continues with Schumann – his *Davidbinderlinter* – "two true romances", she says. "The only thing separating them is about 100 years" – and concludes with Beethoven's last sonata, Op. 111, its pearly hills stretching all the way to infinity. She's played that piece often, though intermittently, over the past 20 or so years and each time she does, another problem gets solved. She won't enlarge upon what it is this time – not while the work is still in progress – but she's happy to explain the process: "I just play, and if it doesn't sound right, I play again, or I dream and play just let it happen, until me, the listener, not me, the player, thinks, 'Ah, that was it!'" And then me, the player, reconstructs exactly why it was right. Sometimes this process takes months, years. And then you want to find out why it took so long to settle, why you could not do it then but can now!

It's this delicate balance between emotion and intellect, instinct and reason, intuition and calculation that gives Uchida's work its edge. She describes in painstaking detail how she believes she's finally found the solution to a single bar of Beethoven's Emperor Concerto. It's this moment where the second subject modulates from B minor to B major and it all happens in one tiny phrase. She used to feel that phrase as a *crescendo*, until she realised that in order to stay, as Beethoven requests, *pianissimo*, then you must imply, if anything, a *diminuendo*. "B major suddenly opens up. It's a different glow," she says, with the effectiveness of one who's just happened upon the lost chord. But it's almost as thrilling to hear her talk about it as play it. Almost. "Thank God," she says. "Otherwise we'd always be talking, not playing." Either way, she's a natural

communicator. With her audience, with the composers she plays. Not a week goes by that she doesn't commune with "her composers": Bach, Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven. She is tirelessly inquisitive on their behalf. She will repeat the same phrase over and over, for as long as it takes to reveal itself. The process never bores her; provided the music doesn't (and she has her mental blocks – Rachmaninov is one). Even as a child she was happy to explore her favourite stories again and again, hoping against hope that she might discover something new.

Childhood was a tale of two cultures. Her father was a Japanese diplomat. Which meant that there was life beyond the clouds, beyond Japan. The family landed in Vienna when Mitsuko was 12. A lucky escape, she now believes. She found her "first love" there: Franz Schubert. This month sees the release of her first Schubert album – the Impromptus Op. 90 and Op. 142. It's taken a while, or rather it's taken as long as it's taken, to get this music "into her way". And to find the right piano for it. The piano in question resides in Uchida's studio, and it goes by the name of "Chalipin".

Inside the studio, Uchida feels her way through the opening page of Schubert's last sonata, music caught "somewhere between love and sorrow" (Schubert's words). The trill in the left hand rolls out like distant thunder. The sound of the instrument is indeed rich and welcoming, warm and subtle like the great Russian bass whose name "he" shares. "Chalipin" has, says Uchida, settled down nicely since his new hammer-heads were installed. Her piano technician has developed the sound according to his character (very important – "you cannot impose character upon an instrument – each one is different"). He sounded particularly well in the Musikverein, Vienna (Uchida's favourite concert hall), where the Schubert recording took place. Almost too warm, in fact: "There is usually some element of frost in

Schubert," says Uchida with a theatrical chill in the voice. "Chalipin" stands back to back with another Steinway, also male (all Uchida's pianos are male). He is super-cool, immensely transparent, ideal for Debussy. "I mix colour and he makes it very clear – quite the reverse of the other one." A third piano resides in the house – "for emergencies".

A while back, Uchida devised a series of concerts built around the music of Schubert and Schoenberg. Her aim was as ever to open people's ears, to encourage them to listen differently, to hear beyond consonance and dissonance and, maybe, in doing so, to discover, contrary to first impressions, that the real conservative is Schoenberg, that the craziness actually lies within Schubert. "By saying 'I understand Schubert but not Schoenberg', I believe people are misunderstanding the work," she says. "That sounds pleasant to say because I got used to it, but that is just a noise because I refuse to hear it! ... People remember what they can easily grasp, and what they can't grasp, they like to repeat. We live in such an impatient age, an age of soundbite psychology and compilation albums – both of which I hate! Nothing in music is short!" But the statement is. Short and frank. What do they make of such statements in Japan? How do they now view Mitsuko Uchida? "Like a strange, exotic bird! I imagine they look at me and think – she sort of looks Japanese, she speaks Japanese, but... Look, I still speak the language well, but whatever language I use, I want to be as clear as possible. In Japan, you never say exactly what you mean. Politeness is all. Politeness is more important than honesty. And that I cannot accept." Of course not. Great musicians never lie. At least, not in front of an audience.

Uchida plays *Berg Schumann and Beethoven*: 7.30pm Wed, Barlican Hall, London EC2 (0171-638 8891)

Pas de trois of the personalities

Optimistic Japanese ladies stood in the Opera House foyer clutching polite notices that read "Want to buy ticket please", and there was a salty smell of taut in the air. The Royal Ballet has long been fighting a rear-guard action against any sort of personality cult among its dancers, but there is no doubt that the prospect of Doreen Russell, Jonathan Cope and Sylvie Guillem in *La Bayadère* is a proposition that shifts tickets.

So far, management has resisted any temptation to return to a world where the likes of Fonteyn automatically commanded higher ticket prices but Guillem is undoubtedly a star of that order. The solemnity of her entrance as the veiled temple dancer is so profound that the capacity audience sat on its hands as if reluctant to break the spell, already caught up in the drama of her performance. A convincing rebuttal, surely, to anyone who complains that she allows her starry personality to obliterate the roles she dances. On Saturday she was Nikiya, whose lover, Solor, forsakes her for Gamzatti. Murdered by her rival, she is reconciled to Solor in a dream and the pair are finally united in death after his wedding to the Rajah's daughter is disrupted by an earthquake.

Guillem manages to combine spiritual purity with a normal, girl-

DANCE

La Bayadère

Royal Opera House, London

ish sensuality. The strength and clarity of her dancing is a constant source of wonder, her *chaîne* turns unravel at dizzying speed. These marvels combine thrillingly with a very modern ability to just walk naturally, arms dangling by her sides in dejected reflection.

To conjure such a mood she has only to contemplate the production. The flaws in Makarova's 1989 version are often blamed on 19th-century theatrical taste but the Royal Ballet's London seasons of *La Bayadère* have shown that if you trust the ballet and perform it wholeheartedly it can be immensely powerful. The Royal Ballet's rule of thumb seems to be: when in doubt, ham it up. Gary Avis's High Brahmin is a painful example of this. The vengeful priest destroyed by desire is a pivotal role in the drama but Avis throws it away with a few camp histrionics. Happily, the exquisite Kingdom of the Shades scene was well-

rehearsed and hit just the right note of high-Victorian melancholy.

Our turbaned love-rat was Jonathan Cope, who showed Guillem off to perfection. His partnership with Doreen Russell was fractionally less successful. The wedding scene prefigures Petipa's *Black Swan pas de deux*, in which our hero is also seduced by the very virtuosity of the wrong woman. Unfortunately Russell's ravishing smiles are of a general nature and she makes little attempt to cement the affections of her stolen warrior. Her dancing, though masterly in places, was slightly uneven. In the wedding scene she had trouble with the beguiling sequence of accelerating and decelerating pirouettes. Perhaps she is saving herself for her Nikiya on 4 April, perhaps she feels that the role is a secondary one. That need not be the case: Covent Garden has seen Guillem dance both women and her reading of the spoilt beauty definitely qualifies for equal billing. Gamzatti is a complex character at a total loss to understand how anyone could prefer a mere dancing girl to a beautiful, rich Rajah's daughter with 180-degree extensions. In an ideal world, I'd like to see Guillem dancing opposite herself.

Performances: 25-27, 31 Mar, 1, 3-4, 10 Apr. Booking: 0171-304 4000

Louise Levene



The radiant corps de ballet of 'La Bayadère'

Photograph: Laurie Lewis

Trial, error and overexposure

THEATRE

Exposition

Arts Theatre, London

Most embarrassing evening as a reviewer was at the Man in the Moon theatre at a performance of *Judgement*, Barry Collins's epic monologue which cast the audience as the tribunal meant to pass sentence on an officer who has had to resort to cannibalism.

That evening, the jury consisted of just me and (I know it sounds far fetched) a Japanese tourist. I spent the interval praying that he wouldn't leave. I was reminded of this incident at the Arts Theatre on Friday night when only around 20 people turned up to see Tom Minter's *Exposition* and many of those appeared to be attached to the author and the director, Areta Breeze, also present, swelling the throng. I'd been seated in the midst of this evidently necessary support group but managed to relocate myself a couple of rows back. The performance, hadn't been going long before I realised that my preferred position would be sinking quietly beneath the floorboards.

It's not the subject (the homo-erotic bond between two friends in disintegrating marriages that have been based on lies) nor (though one of the players is badly miscast) is it the acting that has you shifting in your seat. The cause for dismay is the unvarying woodenness of the treatment, and the way that Minter's dialogue drains plausibility and point from the situations at the same time as Breeze's portentous direction is strenuously hinting at hidden depths.

The play alternates occasions where the two couples meet, or fail fully to meet, for their regular outings at the cinema and theatre with scenes where we overhear the men making private phone calls. In the first stretch we discover that Niall Ashdown's William is a failed writer, still deludedly seeking greatness and battering off his teacher wife (Laura

Endelman), and that Trevor Sellers's James, a tetchily self-important right-wing barrister, is well on the way to alienating the whole world, not just his long-suffering spouse (Kate Anthony).

William and James shared rooms at college and all these years later, in circumstances that seem to involve you believing that people can wander freely in and out of a barrister's chambers at dead of night, they discover that they have just shared a rent boy. By some fifty work with the bust on which James keeps his wig. William removes this down-to-his-underpants blackmail threat (played by Robert Miles) and, in a last-minute switch to territory bordering on Patrick Hamilton's *Rope*, they look forward to a kinky future renewed intimacy and of capitalism on the scene, turning it to a publishable occasion, then a punishable occurrence.

Still, literally unappealing dialogue in which characters say things like "Since the fair days of collegiate youth" and "It's been some since I've felt this potent" don't help you to credit the relationship between the male pair, either way back when or now. James says that he loved the fire his friend had as an undergraduate, but – notwithstanding the fact that the depredations of time are a concern of the play – Mr Ashdown's performance suggests that William would have had, in the student years, all the charisma of a Northern chemist.

After sticking up for them, the play loses sight of the wives the victims of this male nostalgia for the days before disillusionment and (by association) marriage. *Exposition* begins with images of audience discontent in theatres and cinema. As a case, for me, of art mirroring life.

To 19 April. Booking: 0171-336 2132

Paul Taylor

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Tomorrow in the Tabloid: Tom Lubbock looks at the Berlin of George Grosz. Plus more from Dr Phil Hammond

the leader page

Today's student: well-qualified in harsh realities

Britain's students, it seems, have grown up. Perhaps it is time for the rest of us to do so too, and rethink our attitudes to this important subgroup of our society.

As we report today, most students take their work seriously, are not deep in debt and no more likely than other young people to be out of their heads on legal and illegal drugs. Yet the legacy of 1968 lingers on. That was the year when "student" became loaded with meanings other than simply "one who studies". It was one of those dawns - false, as it turned out - when it was all right to be alive, but to be young was very all right. For many, it was a liberating experience, just to think for a short time that they were living through a revolutionary moment, and to experiment with alternative values and other hallucinations.

But for most, it was never really like that, as Jack Straw and Tony Blair will testify. Mr Straw, a serious-minded student leader at the time, was never even offered a job. Mr Blair himself was too young for 1968, but was a serious-minded student in the early 1970s. He even took singing in the Ugly Rumours seriously. And he didn't do drugs, either. A few of those who are asking the electorate for permission to run the country may have become social conservatives in between being sent down from Oxford and election to the Shadow Cabinet, but Messrs Straw

and Blair have been moderate puritans all along.

Today's survey suggests that they are more typical of students, then and now, than popular stereotypes allow. However, there have been important changes in students' attitudes since 1968. It is not just the idealism that has taken on a more pragmatic character. The idea of learning for its own sake is fast disappearing, too. This started to happen quite suddenly in 1980, when students peered out of their ivory towers and noticed the long tail of the queue of unemployed people stretching towards them. Student life lost much of its romance when it was dominated by job plans and curriculum vitae-filling. But, as with most losses of innocence, this was a necessary evil. It might have been possible to preserve a purist notion of higher education as a good in itself when it was restricted to a tiny elite, but now that a third of over-18s are full-time students, economic factors must predominate. Tax-payers might be prepared to pay for a few of the very cleverest to study things of no economic value, or, like Ruth Lawrence and her Knot Theory, which might or might not prove valuable. But for the rest of us, economics is our foundation course.

It was economics that drove the expansion of higher education - young people were well aware that higher qualifications would decide not just

how much they earned, but whether they got a job at all, and so led a demand-led system. But the expansion of higher education is one of many achievements that this Government seems unable to take credit for, because it does not really know whether it approves of students. It is hampered by out-of-date notions of who students are and what they are like. Even the Labour Party, for which education is the Holy Trinity, refuses to come to terms with the reality of student life today.

It is New Labour, specifically, which declared that the competitiveness of



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British workers in world markets depended above all on the quality of their education. It was Gordon Brown who repeated the mantra of Robert Reich, Bill Clinton's Labor Secretary, that you have to "learn more to earn more". So you would expect Labour to have important things to say about students and their academics. No such luck. Mr Brown has some bright ideas for a "University for Industry", and education or training would be one of the options for young people no longer allowed to claim dole. But on the question of funding for higher education, as on so many other subjects, New

Labour has successfully closed down the debate.

After a few tentative hints at something more, Labour has settled into a familiar posture of agreeing with the Government on the principle of student loans, while criticising the precise mechanisms currently in place - as usual, minding its tongue on the basis of "not in front of the electorate". This is hardly the way to construct that "glad confident morning" feeling on 2 May.

One of the key findings of today's survey is that the average student expects to leave university with a debt of £2,360. In relation to the lifetime advantage conferred by higher education, this is an astonishingly small amount of money, and it is high time this was recognised.

Of course students should pay for the cost of their own higher education, which ensures - as today's study confirms - that they are able to enter the labour market at around national average earnings. And of course the government should be able to devise a loan scheme that would not discourage students from poor families from going to university. It may be that a system of repayment through the tax system, linked to future earnings, would be the best way to do this, as well as taking into account the fact that many students may want to repay their debt to the community in some form of low-

paid public service rather than cash. The main objection to this reform is that learning is valuable to society as a whole irrespective of its economic utility - precisely the attitude that students themselves have, by and large, shed. This does not mean that they have lost their love of learning, or their idealism. These are qualities that ought to flourish among young people, and even older ones, whether or not they are in full-time education. They are not commodities that require public subsidy.

Dumb animals and whales

We humans must make a pitiful sight. For centuries, and with accelerating ferocity, we have destroyed other species and degraded their environment. But when one sperm whale gets stuck in the Fifth of North, heaven, earth and the Deep Sea World aquarium are moved to try to guide it back to the freedom of the seas. The whale, aided more by another whale than by humankind, swims off into the open water, and there is much rejoicing in the most sophisticated part of the animal kingdom. Then what does the ungrateful animal do? Goes back and gets stuck again. That will teach us to think we know better.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Union history belies Blair fairy tale

Sir: Our daughter has just celebrated her 18th birthday, and of course she cannot remember the view from the window of the hospital in which she was born - but we can! The cold March dawn revealed a man-made landscape of piles of rotting rubbish, and a team of mechanical diggers was busy digging pits into which the hospital refuse was being buried.

By cruel contrast, the human dead lay unburied as Britain was paralysed by the "winter of discontent", which was in truth a euphemism for anarchy. The full force of the unions was unleashed on Callaghan's government, forced to go cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund for finance.

It was a humiliating spectacle, and the country in its misery ached for a change - in 1979 our prayers were answered and change came. Our daughter is a true child of Thatcher who like thousands more has only known Conservative government, and we believe articulates for her whole generation when she asks, "How bad can Labour be?" Soon we suspect they will find out.

It is more than likely that students will turn out en masse to support Tony Blair, but before they cast that all-important vote perhaps they should spare a moment to consider the positive and undeniable achievements of the past 18 years.

When our daughter's generation buy a house, they will benefit from the lowest mortgage rate for the past 30 years, and from their earnings will be deducted the lowest basic tax rate for over half a century. We are No 1 in Europe for foreign investment, one in three of the population now go on to higher education, and as a nation we have lost fewer working days through strikes since records began. State monopolies have crumbled and the concept of choice is now the norm.

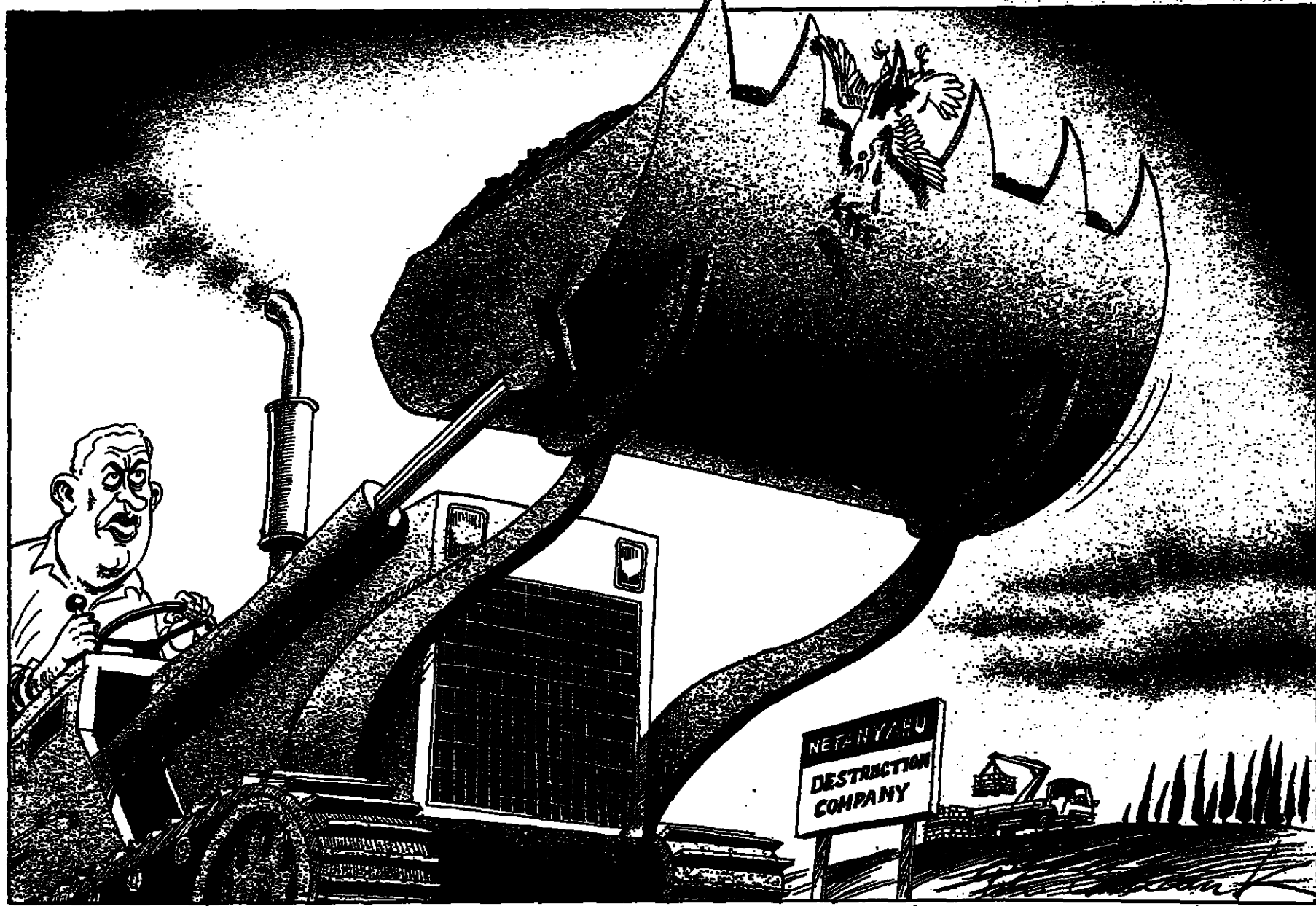
Of course there have been mistakes, naked arrogance, crass misjudgements, disappointments and, worst of all, broken promises. We have all been hurt to a greater or lesser extent, but taken as a whole our daughter's childhood and adolescence has been played out against a background of stable and competent government.

The election is very near, the die is cast and once again we are told the country wants change. All we urge our daughter to do is think how costly and extravagant a gesture change for the sake of it can be.

The unions are hovering in the wings but will soon claim centre stage. Today, with much of their power curbed, they seem docile and compliant pussy cats - but striped leopards don't exist, and Labour's fairy tale will have no happy ending.
GRAHAM AND ELEANOR WRIGHT
Newtown Pwys

Sir: I am sorry to see that Mr Major loathes what we are doing in Camden Council ("Morale-raising pep talk sends troops to battle", 20 March). I just wonder what it is that he loathes.

Is it, perhaps, the quality of our services, which have received three Chartermarks from his own Cabinet Office? Is it the quality of our education, which shows far better results than Tony Wadsworth or Tony Westminster? Is it our Regeneration Strategy,



which has won £50m of government money and has been commended by his own government office for London?

Is it our housing programme, which has been commended consistently by his Department of the Environment? Is it our work on cutting crime, where our partnership with the Metropolitan Police in tackling drug dealing in King's Cross was given first place in the Metropolitan Police Annual Report?

Of course, it could be something rather different that Mr Major loathes. Perhaps it is the memory of standing in this borough as a parliamentary candidate and being soundly beaten. Or, perhaps, it is the memory of his party chairman, Brian Mowhiney, complaining that we were wasting money on a centre for women which he then discovered was sponsored by Save the Children Fund.
Councillor RICHARD ARTHUR
Leader of the Council
Camden
London WC1

Sir: The Rules of Declaration of MPs' interests ("Sleaze report casts shadow over MPs", 21 March) require an MP for a particular constituency to declare in the register if 25 per cent or over of the election fighting fund was contributed by one individual or company. Such funds are on average about £8,000 in total.

I have made it quite clear to Sir Gordon Downey that if the Hamersmith Conservative Association received a £500 donation in 1987 - 10 years ago - that was entirely a matter for the Association. I did not know about it at the time. At every election all political parties receive funds for

elections and if Ian Greer wanted to make a donation, that is a matter for him. Furthermore, £500 is well under the 25 per cent threshold and would not have qualified for declaration in any case.

I was not elected for Hamersmith at the 1987 general election. It has been a Labour seat for over 20 years. I was subsequently elected for a different constituency, Brentford and Isleworth, five years later. At no time has my present constituency association or I received any donation of any amount from Mr Greer.

All this innuendo and "sleaze" boils down to the possibility that 10 years ago, five years before I was even an MP, someone made a donation to my constituency party that I did not know about, but which in any case was perfectly legal and legitimate and would not have required declaration even if I had become the MP. No wonder the public are confused by all this. I certainly am.
NIRJ JOSEPH DEVA, MP
(Brentford and Isleworth, Con)
London SW7

Family trains

Sir: Stephen Gray (letter, 21 March) makes a plea for family carriages on trains and Alex Galloway (20 March) suggests mobile-phone-free carriages. They will be pleased to learn that the Great Western franchise, out of Paddington to the West Country, has provided both for more than a year.
TIMOTHY S. ATHER
London SW73

Mr Feign and the Hong Kong press

Sir: It was hardly surprising that your new cartoonist, Larry Feign, should make his debut on the foreign pages today with a wholesale libel on the press here which chooses not to run his "Lily Wong" strip. And naturally, he cannot resist repeating his shopworn pun on the name of my newspaper (though he treads carefully with the far more numerous Chinese-language titles).

Readers unacquainted with the hothouse media world in Hong Kong should know that Mr Feign has strong feelings about the *South China Morning Post*, which dropped "Lily Wong" almost two years ago. My predecessor was applying one of those cost-cutting exercises which hit most newspapers from time to time, and decided to economise on the strip.

Of course, despite the absence of evidence, nobody in their right mind could possibly believe that the decision hadn't been taken for dark political motives - an allegation which *The Independent* cheerfully retailed, again with zero evidence, when announcing that you would be running "Lily Wong". I myself wasn't involved in the decision to drop the strip, but I must admit that I had been taken aback by Mr Feign's drawings of Chinese with streams of spit coming from their mouth or as caricatures worthy of a 1940s Yellow Peril comic. If that's being pro-China, I can only plead guilty.

(How would you feel about a strip which showed South African blacks as fuzzy-wuzzies and witch doctors, or Israeli security police as hook-nosed shekel-counters?)

You may also understand the reaction here of local journalists, who are doing a difficult job with great professionalism, when this kind of insult is what they get in return.
JONATHAN FENBY
South Morning China Post
Hong Kong

Screening much improved

Sir: Cervical screening is the best and indeed the only way of detecting pre-cancer in a woman's cervix and of providing early and potentially life-saving treatment.

I share some of Dr Phil Hammond's concerns (column, 18 March) about the way that cervical screening was introduced in the 1960s and developed over the next 20 years. Fortunately, the cervical screening programme of today is a much improved model.

In 1988, the programme was reorganised and there are now national standards which everyone who works in cervical screening must meet and a quality assurance system to make sure they do.

Since 1988 the fall in the mortality rate, which had been running at 1 or 2 per cent a year, has risen to around 7 per cent every year. And an audit by the Imperial Cancer Research Fund and the NHS programme has shown that

screening prevented nearly half the potential cases of cervical cancer in 1992.

It is true that for every woman whose life we save by detecting and treating a pre-cancerous condition that would have become cancer there are several women who are made anxious - however carefully we phrase the letter - by the news that they have abnormal results. This happens in every screening programme.

The important question - as Dr Hammond identifies - is "does the benefit in terms of lives saved outweigh the anxiety which may be caused to many women?" I believe that most women would answer with a resounding "yes".
JULIETTA PATNICK
National Co-ordinator
NHS Cervical Screening Programme
Sheffield

Children's refuge must not close

Sir: It is difficult to imagine a more urgent need than an emergency refuge for abused children. The threatened closure ("Children's refuge may close", 21 March) of the London "safe home" - one of only four in the country - will leave hundreds of desperate children with nowhere to go.

The buck passing between the Department of Health and local authorities is an ignominious spectacle. They should get together and agree on joint temporary funding until the next government is elected. Then a long-term solution can be worked out.
LORD ASHLEY OF STOKE
House of Lords
London SW1

The lost art of whistling

Sir: Jack O'Sullivan's article on police whistles and whistling generally revived many happy memories. In my desk drawer I have the police whistle which was carried for 29 years by my father, who was a sergeant in the Kent Constabulary, stationed for the last years of his time at Broadstairs police station.

On whistling as an art or skill, I met my husband on a train and boat returning from leave in 1943 to Northern Ireland when he whistled the whole of the 3rd movement of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, the Pastoral, right through. He and an RAF warrant officer once held a busful of RAF/WAAF types in silence whilst they whistled a long piece of Mozart right through.
STELLA COTTMAN
Bath

Dunlop daps

Sir: "Daps" (letters, 18-22 March) is the usual word here in Somerset for plimsoles; and according to a news item on Radio Bristol a few years ago, it is an acronym for "Dunlop Athletic Plimsoles", made in Bristol until the factory was closed.
HELEN MURPHIS
Glastonbury, Somerset

Sir: Daps? Welsh? No, daps hail from Bristol as any good Bristolian who has worn them in PE at school will tell you.

Incidentally, Bristol has many odd alternative words but my favourite is the notion that snow falls all over the country but it only pitches in Bristol.
MIRIAM ANDREWS
Hampton Hill, Middlessex

Sir: In my middle-class Devon childhood in the Forties and Fifties, the verb "to dap" was used in much the same way as "to pop"; as in "She's just dapped down the road for a minute, or 'Dap up and fetch my specs, please'".
MISS MARY MACRAE-GIBSON,
Diss, Norfolk

Sir: When I visited the Falkland Islands in 1988, I saw the word DAP sprayed in large letters on a number of houses in Stanley. I was told at the time that this was a Spanish acronym used by the Argentine forces in 1982 to mark buildings to be protected from attack.

Following your recent correspondence, I now wonder whether it indicated the presence of a large contingent of Welsh from Patagonia among the invading forces.
ANDREW MARSHALL
London SW2

Pyramids trick

Sir: It seems very unlikely that the Egyptians would have needed to construct straight ramps to build the pyramids ("Getting to the point: how rolling stones helped build the pyramids", 21 March) when the pyramids themselves provided ready-made ones.

By using the principle of the hairpin bend to take a road up a mountain, stones could be carried spirally up the pyramid structure itself - at any gradient to suit the required load and its method of transportation. Moreover as the pyramid rose so, with very little extra effort, would this spiral ramp.
SEBASTIAN MACMILLAN
The Martin Centre for Architectural and Urban Studies
University of Cambridge

Why a hung council is a strong council

Democracy is not always best served by a big majority, says **Bob Pritchard**

Leicester may not have Doncaster's prestigious racecourse, but the behaviour of its Labour majority is remarkably similar. I speak from 10 years' experience as one of 16 opposition city councillors facing a 40-strong ruling group. Apart from electoral reform, the fashionable prescription to end the abuses that we experience is elected executive mayors. That would be a mistake.

The ways things are done in Leicester is not that much different from the way they are done in Parliament. Every controversial decision is taken in a back room by a few strong men and the occasional woman. The outcome of every committee or council "debate" is known before it starts. Worse, our professional officers are beholden to the ruling group. They do their best to implement the decisions their "cabinet" comes up with.

I am also group leader of the Liberal Democrats on Leicestershire County Council, where no party has had a majority for 16 years. This has taught me that the behaviour of the city council has little to do with the fact that it is Labour-controlled and everything to do with the fact that it is a secure majority dictatorship.

With absolute power, why exercise your mind listening to opposing views? Much easier, and more fun, to rubbish them, since it can be done with impunity. With nobody to impede you, why not cut corners and dispense with procedural niceties?

This way the county council conducts its affairs is far from perfect, but compared with the city council it is a model of democratic propriety and competence. There is no ruling group or ruling coalition. Alliances are formed and dissolved in public. Committee chairs are elected at each meeting. They simply conduct its business. They cannot dictate outcomes, because they do not command a tame majority. The relationship

With absolute power, why listen to the opposition?

between chairs and officers that I see on the city council is not possible. If chairs misuse their position, we don't elect them again.

Most elected members play a significant role because every member of a committee is important. A large proportion of them are entitled to ask for policy papers to be placed before the committees on which they sit. Most members who could be described as backbenchers choose to be; officers can give impartial advice because they are not beholden to any political group.

The difference between the two councils has nothing to do with the quality of their members – more than a quarter of the county councillors are also city councillors. We all behave completely differently on the two councils. We have no choice. It is not the people, but the structure that determines what we do and how we do it. As one former chief executive put it: "Since Leicestershire has been hung, there has been more genuine debate and more intelligent decision-making than there ever was before."

The political establishment and the media are obsessed with the need for "strong" government and "firm" leadership. The fashion for the idea of elected mayors is a reflection of this. But it is surely governments without majorities that are genuinely strong, because consensus produces legislation which sticks. It is harder to get things done, of course, but getting things right is surely more important than getting things done.

"Strong" government is government by chairman's (or elected mayor's?) whim, untrammelled by meaningful debate. It is a costly indulgence. It was prime-ministerial whim that gave us the poll tax, against informed advice from every constituency of opinion. It cost us dear to implement and then abandon. The reorganisation that followed in Leicestershire was likewise imposed on us against informed opinion from all quarters, and against public opinion. How much public money has been wasted on these two intellectually bankrupt exercises in strong government?

"Gridlock is good government," said an American commentator explaining Wall Street's surge after Clinton won again last year. It wasn't celebrating Clinton's win, he explained: it was responding to the fact that the Republicans had retained control of the House.

I pray for the day when his British counterparts learn that. Why are we so afraid of checks and balances, and label the result with pejorative words like "hung", instead of welcoming it as opening the door to democratic government?

The writer is Professor Emeritus, Leicester University, and Liberal Democrat group leader on Leicestershire County Council.



Women, the forgotten voters

One third of all women have not yet decided how to vote. They are floating and dithering as never before, while only 25 per cent of men are still undecided. How do the parties greet this news? Do you hear the distant rumble of a political stampede to try to capture that tempting prize? Not a sign of it.

Two reports out today highlight women's attitudes and voting habits: one from the Fawcett Society based on Mori polling, the other, "What Women Want: on Politics", from the Women's Communications Centre.

The Mori/Fawcett research shows that more women are aloof and drift than last year. Fawcett's focus groups of floating women reveal that they do not trust any of the parties to keep their promises. They think politicians are out of touch and they are put off by the confrontational nature of the Westminster wrestling ring. Now Fawcett, being a noble and feminist organisation, puts the best possible spin they can on all this, and their director, Shelagh Diplock, describes the floating women thus: "These are the thoughtful voters, women who are deeply concerned about the impact that their vote could have on their lives and communities. They represent millions of women whose votes are yet to be won."

Ho hum. Women are more thoughtful voters than men? How come this woman's thoughtfulness has brought victory to every Tory government since the war? Talk about turkey voting for Christmas. Floating voters? More like headless chickens. If it wasn't for the suffragettes, if women never had the vote, we would have had nothing but Labour governments. On reflection, that too is a pretty grim prospect, but at least there would have been no Thatcher, no poll tax, no "Euro-phobia", no privatised fat-cats, no tripling in the numbers of the very poor. At the last election, Conservatives had a seven per cent lead among women voters and that gender gap in voting habits has been constant since the war. Why? Conservatism reflects security, the known, and the aspirational. Advertisers all know how women aspire upwards far more than men of the same class. Cloth-cap Labour was not for them.

Women don't care about politics, don't think it's for them and they don't want to know; they are intentional know-nothings. In a Mori poll recently, only 43 per cent of women described themselves as interested in politics, while a huge 63 per cent said they were not interested. (Among men, it was the opposite, with 61 per cent interested and only 31 per cent not.) Researchers hasten to find excuses for women: men may not really know more about politics than women, but masculine pride means

they pretend to. Against that are the television viewing figures: BBC research shows that women rate news and current affairs pretty low, men rate them high.

This brings us up abruptly against what has always been the difficult part of feminist theology, like Christians struggling to believe in the Trinity and the Virgin birth. Feminist theory says women are always, at all times, and in all ways better than men. End of story. We can explain away the relative shortage of great women painters, composers, leaders, mathematicians, etc. because women have always been held back. Women are no stupider when it comes to exam results: girls are doing better than boys. Women have a tendency to be nicer – not so bossy and self-important, more self-deprecating, better company, less bombastic. Mothers tend to come better out of literature and autobiography than fathers: motherhood is suffused with all the good, tender, affectionate things, while fatherhood is fraught with fear, authority, remoteness and the need to control others. But if women are so nice, how come so many more of them vote Conservative?

The story is not as simple as that. Women are not a single homogenous group, and young women vote differently to older women. Among 18- to 24-year-olds, six per cent more women support Labour, while seven per cent more support men vote Conservative. Bob Worcester of Mori thinks young men's tendency to vote Tory is mainly a testosterone factor – Tories are tougher and young men swing behind Thatcher in 1983 in admiration of her Falklands victory. But by the time women reach 35, conservatism seizes in. By the time they reach 55, seven per cent fewer support Labour than men of the same age.

Now the question for Labour's future is this: are young women harbingers of a better

tomorrow, a new generation with different attitudes more likely to vote Labour? Or, as they grow older, will they also grow into their mother's and grandmother's voting habits? No one knows yet. After all, today's fifty-something women were once Sixties swingers, yet look at them now. It seems that once women have children, their attitudes veer sharply towards conservative values, while fatherhood does not much change men's views. Now Labour might draw great comfort from the strong support they get from the young. But alas, 57 per cent of 18- to 24-year-olds don't bother to vote – and demographically there are not very many of them anyway. That explains why no politicians are to be found wooing them.

But why don't politicians target women voters more vigorously? The second report out today studies the parties' draft manifestos and campaign guides to date, searching in vain for much to appeal specifically to women. The parties all have their women's documents, but after launching them with a one-day razzamatazz women vanish from the broad picture. Child care, equal rights for part-timers, equal pay (still 20 per cent less than men's) – all these things are so marginal to men that they fall through the grating when it comes to drawing up broad party policies.

Is that why women are turned off politics? It is still an activity for men, by men talking to other men. Women are the also-rans, the add-ons, the extras, the occasional bright suit in a sea of grey. While all that is true, no, I'm afraid it doesn't quite hold water, for women are not opting out and refusing to vote. If you want to see a taste of genuine, dangerous political alienation, consider the young blacks, 80 per cent of whom don't vote. No, a higher proportion of women actually bother to vote than men – and more of them choose to vote Conservative.

The gender gap in voting may not matter this time because Labour's lead is so incredibly huge. But there are plenty of Labour politicians who still doubt their luck, who cross their fingers, eschew ladders and black cats for fear that the Tories could yet by some black art pull off a miraculous revival. (I am not one of those: I know the Tories have had it.) But anxious Labour politicians would do well to start thinking harder about the women's vote. If one third of all women really have not made up their minds yet (silly moos), they could still be the ones to sweep John Major back to Downing Street. So when the real manifestos are published shortly, all parties would be well-advised to make sure child care, after-school schemes, holiday clubs and equal pay are up there in the opening paragraphs, not tucked away in some brief *capit de l'escalier*.



Polly Toynbee

Freud and Ford: so close they're bound to Crash

As the Tory Government apparently heads helplessly along the electoral highway towards the inevitable poll, and the spectators hang around hoping to get some sensual pleasure out of the impact, our thoughts turn naturally away to the film *Crash* which has just been awarded a general release and is out there somewhere, going along at 90mph with no signals. Is it controversial to link cars and sex? There is nothing new about the whole field of motoring psychosexual behaviour, or limo-psychosexuality. As early as the 1930s, the novelist William Faulkner observed that many men lavished on their cars the sort of affectionate grooming that used to go on their wives, and was it not Scott Fitzgerald who observed that the two great innovators of the 20th century had almost the same name. Freud and Ford?

Yes, human behaviour is altered by the presence of cars, and a whole new branch of psychology has grown up to explore this phenomenon. Foremost among the experts in the field is Dr Dion-Bouton, who joins us today to deal with some of the emotional inquiries which have flooded into my office over the weekend, causing tailbacks and delays which have taken days to clear up. All yours. Doc!

I gather that this film *Crash* is about people who get some sort of sexual turn-on from watching car crashes. Well, this may well happen. I don't know. What I do know is that I have the opposite condition. By which I mean that whenever I am engaged in sexual activity, which I have to say I do not find very exciting *per se*, I find myself thinking of the far more arousing subject of cars and driving. Typically, when I am in bed with my girlfriend, I suddenly find myself in my imagination driving a Bentley or Jaguar at terrific speeds through rush-hour traffic, scorching everything in my passage, and I find this wonderfully voluptuous. Then, so my girlfriend tells me, I cry out something like "Get out of the way! I'm coming through on the inside!" or "Mind your backside on the hard shoulder!" and of course she gets alarmed and shakes me, and I come back to my senses and I find I am not driving a car at all but just in bed with a girl. Then I get up and make a cup of tea. Is there something wrong with me?

Dr Dion-Bouton writes: No.

You have your head well screwed on. Sex is a shoddy, risky business, but you know where you are with a good car. I find I also have the opposite reaction to the people in the film called *Crash* but in a different way. They may be sexually aroused by crashes, but I am sexually aroused by traffic jams. Whenever I am in a long tailback I get these very lascivious thoughts and I want to stretch out in the back of the car with my partner and do

naughty things, but as soon as the traffic picks up again I lose all desire for hanky-panky and become calm and focussed on driving again. My ultimate dream would be to see a controversial sex film called *Gridlock*, in which no cars moved at all. Is there anything wrong with this?

Dr Dion-Bouton writes: Yes. You are a very sick woman. You seem to have some sort of control fixation whereby you wish your car to give you a completely subservient attitude, and to dominate it. But a relationship with a car is based on equality, observing each other's needs. This talk of "hanky-panky" and "naughty things" betrays your infantile regression. Grow up and love your car properly!

I am very interested in what Steve Norris has been saying about his change of mind on the Newbury bypass. If you remember, he was a transport minister who was famous for two things: for having lots of mistresses and for liking cars a lot. Nowadays we don't hear about his mistresses any more – he has suddenly become famous for his recantation on roads, for saying that more roads only produce more traffic. Are you impressed by his *non* against cars?

Dr Dion-Bouton writes: No. I am only impressed by your failure to put two and two together. Here is a man who seems to lose interest in sex and in cars at the same time, and you are surprised? But if you take the basic premise of limpsy psychology – namely that sex and cars are intimately bound together – then there can be no surprise at all.

If what you say about sex and cars were true, there would be some tell-tale phallic element in driving. If you can name just one, I will be convinced.

Dr Dion-Bouton writes: Phallic symbol in driving? Have you ever seen the winner of a Grand Prix take a bottle of champagne and shake it till it emits froth?

I am convinced. Dr Dion-Bouton will be back again soon, if he drives carefully.



Miles Kington

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Mobile users retreat from Carriage G

Ann Treneman finds that silence is golden on the London-to-Cardiff line

The only thing you should be able to hear in Carriage A of the 14.00 from Paddington to Cardiff is the sound of silence. "We respectfully ask you to refrain from using a mobile phone," says the sign. In any other country, it would be ignored; in Britain, it is tantamount to the word of God.

It really is peer pressure that enforces it. If you are in a Quiet Carriage and someone's phone does go off, people jump up and rush for the door looking extremely guilty," says a Great Western Trains spokeswoman. It was introduced – quietly – in one carriage per train a year ago, in second class, and the only complaints have been from jealous first-class passengers. Now Carriage G is phone-free as well. Shhhh! Something is happening here. For years we have just put up with the nerdo shouting into his

mobile, but the number of mobile phone users has reached critical mass. "It is just under seven million and we predict it will hit 12 million by the year 2000," says David Massey of Cellnet.

Someone had to do something. Parliament led the way, with its booklet *Regulations on Photography, Filming, Sound Recordings, Painting, Sketching and Mobile Telephones*. There may be zero tolerance on watercolours, but the dreaded ringing pocket is allowed outside the chamber, although only if an MP or peer is "discreet". Sadly, the rules are self-regulated, so we will never know the indiscreet truth.

Outside Westminster, things are not so fuzzy. Golf courses, theatres, hospitals and restaurants are clamping down (One-2-One has even published an *Etiquette Guide to Golf*). The mobile phone user is a borderline hate figure on most

trains – the Quiet Carriage is here to stay – and the image cannot be helped by the news that another dejection, the taxi driver, is being paid to prattle on about them.

But why – other than the fact that they are being sold by taxi drivers – do we hate the mobile phone so much? Guy Fielding of Queen Margaret College, Edinburgh, is a telephone expert and a self-confessed mobile phone user. "I do talk on railway carriages. I think that is legitimate. If I was saying the exact thing to somebody face-to-face, there would be no problem. My own view is that the reason it is irritating is that you cannot hear the other half of the conversation."

He suggests that a quieter word or two – evidently we talk twice as loudly on the phone as we do in normal conversation – might improve things, but it is probably too late for moderation to save the

day. All over Britain you can see the result of the new intolerance.

"One of the most characteristic postures of modern times is the crouching mobile telephonist, slightly stooped with a hand over an ear, struggling to hear and be heard," says Mercury's Little Black Book.

Increasingly, the place you see these creatures is doorways, jockeying for space with that other parish, the smoker. Here, the out-casts are in charge; and perhaps that is the attraction. If so, it would answer a modern-day puzzle: why, if the number of smokers is dropping, are there always the same number of people in doorways? Are they throwing away their Marlboros only to pick up a mobile? Perhaps they are simply addicted to doorways: it certainly gives them something to shout about.

Footsie stages a retreat on election jitters and interest rate worries

Only one week of the hustings and already the contention that the election is factored into share prices is being challenged.

Equities fell each day last week with Footsie recording a near 170-point fall and the supporting FTSE 250 index losing 143. The retreat was not, of course, entirely due to the Major/Blair confrontation. Interest rates were a strong influence.

Speculation rates will go up in the US this week and soon after polling day there will be a savage hike here as the market reacts to the election result. It would be easy to blame the prospect of a tighter money for the decline. There does, however, appear to be evidence that election jitters are starting to haunt the stock market.

The number of bargains completed in the last five trading days was intriguingly high and share turnover was also eye-catching.

It was the result of election worries and tax considerations. Stockbrokers reported a tendency, certainly among private investors, to lock in profits after the long bull, ignoring possible tax bills.

But with the financial year drawing to a close many private investors are inclined to look at their capital gains situation, making the necessary adjustments to their portfolios to make sure they get the £6,300 exemption.

Such activity is good for stockbrokers' bank balances but normally has little impact on the market's level. More important to its performance is the actions of institutional investors. They indulge in bid and breakfast trades and around this time of year are known to undertake a little portfolio window dressing which often creates distortions. With such activity occurring under the shadow of what is likely to be a dirty, vitriolic

election campaign, the market is clearly set for a difficult time over the next two weeks.

And then the new tax year is likely to start with the market facing more pressures. There is a grave danger the knock-about political confrontations will unsettle foreign investors. If they should take fright, talk of a Footsie correction to 3,800 could be too cautious.

There are also the problems being encountered over the Crest computerised settlement system. Some private client stockbrokers claim it is too slow, forcing staff to remain at their desks late in the evening. The so-called "residual stocks" - those which for one reason or another are not on Crest - will be defined next month. So dealing in out-of-the-way shares may become even more difficult.

Crest argues its performance has improved, with 80 per cent of deals settled on the intended day, similar to the old system.

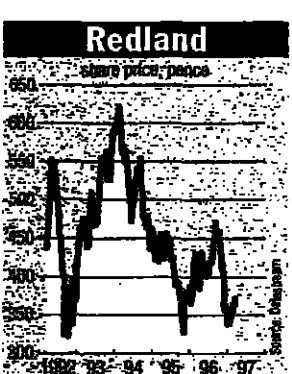


STOCK MARKET WEEK

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year

Alliance and Leicester Building Society could also present difficulties when it arrives next month (dealings are expected to start on 21 April).



With a valuation estimated up to £3bn it will be the largest introduction the market has experienced, providing a serious test for Crest.

The building society, to be followed later this year by the likes of Halifax, Woolwich and Norwich Union, has arranged an intriguing dealing service to smooth its arrival with blue-blooded stockbroker Cazenove.

Its members who wish to sell shares have been offered a free dealing service. If they notify their selling intention by 11 April their shares will be parcellled by Caz and sold by auction, the first occurring on the Friday before dealings start.

Members who use this service will collect the average

price obtained through the auctions and any other related sales.

Alliance & Leicester qualifies for Footsie membership, causing yet another adjustment. The composition of the blue-chip index may have to be re-examined once the other mutuals arrive to prevent it being hopelessly distorted by financial shares.

There is a strong flow of profits this week despite the Easter holiday. The building industry takes pride of place with an array of building material, construction and property groups reporting.

Top of the list are Blue Circle Industries, Caradon and Redland. Others reporting include Travis Perkins, Taylor Woodrow, Barratt Developments and Slough Estates.

Their combined results should underlie the building revival. BCI is likely to produce an 11 per cent profit gain to £303m and Caradon should

show it has overcome its problems with a 16 per cent gain to £175m.

But Redland will not join the Easter parade. The group recently suffered the indignity of losing its Footsie status as its shares, riding at 634p in the winter of 1994, fell to 328.5p. They closed last week at 360.5p.

Overseas influences have hit the group. NatWest Securities' analyst Andy Bell says the volume across Europe was poor in Redland's last quarter. The group also suffered losses in its French aggregates business and problems in the German housing market.

He predicts a profit fall from £355.1m to £252m with a unchanged 16.7p year's dividend.

There has been talk Redland intends to arrest the decline through a demerger or takeover strike. But any action could be a long way off.

Incheape, the international trading group, is another on the

profits list. It, too, has suffered a sharp share fall, also giving up Footsie membership. The price reached a 630p peak in early 1993; last week it was 255.5p.

Reasons for the decline, say Nigel Uley and Tony Shepard at Greig Middleton, include lack of focus and an uncompetitive product range due to the strength of the Japanese yen. "These appear to have been either addressed by the new management team or reversed in the market," the Greig men look for a modest profit recovery, from £146.8m to £158.5m.

The shares of the two laggards are not short of supporters. Mr Bell believes Redland is a buy and Messrs Uley and Shepard take the view Incheape offers a 75p upside.

Others with results include fashion retailer Next (£191m against £125.3m) and P&O (£290m compared with £330.1m).

Alcoholic Beverages

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Ind
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00

Banks, Merchant

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Ind
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00

Banks, Retail

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Ind
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Barclays	12.50	0.00	100	0.00

Breweries, Pubs & Rest

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Ind
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00

Distributors

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Ind
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00

Engineering Vehicles

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Ind
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
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Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00

Extractive Industries

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Ind
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
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Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
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Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00

Food Manufacturers

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Ind
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
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Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
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Diversified Industries

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Ind
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
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Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00

Electricity

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Ind
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
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Electronics

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Ind
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
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Building Materials

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Ind
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
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Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
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Chemicals

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Ind
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Building/Construction

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Ind
Adnoca	12.50	0.00	100	0.00
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Electronics

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Ind
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Building Materials

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Germany's ploy to keep Italy out now threatens the EMU project

GAVYN DAVIES

It beggars belief that a single currency should be desirable for a country with a budget deficit of 2.9 per cent of GDP in 1997 but wholly impossible for one with a budget deficit of, say, 3.5 per cent of GDP.

The whole EMU process is now being endangered by one particular problem which has been created as a result of an intricate game involving Germany, France and Italy. It concerns the interpretation of the Maastricht convergence criteria on budget sustainability, with particular reference to the 3 per cent limit for budget deficits. When the Maastricht Treaty was agreed, member states were perfectly aware that a monetary union could only work satisfactorily if there was tough control over budget deficits.

One of the convergence criteria contained in the treaty requires that government financial positions should be "sustainable", which is subsequently defined to mean that members of the monetary union "shall avoid excessive government deficits".

The treaty does not define an excessive deficit in an unambiguous manner. The Commission is given the responsibility of monitoring the budgetary situation with a view to identifying "gross errors" in individual countries. One of the criteria in this regard is whether the ratio of the planned or actual government deficit exceeds 3 per cent of GDP, "unless either the ratio has declined substantially and continuously or the excess is only exceptional and temporary".

The Commission's report shall also take into account whether the government deficit exceeds government investment expenditures, and all other relevant factors including the medium-term economic and budgetary position of the member state.

It is obvious from this description that the drafters of the treaty never intended anything so narrow as to suggest that the 3 per cent limit for the budget deficit should be an absolute requirement, and certainly not that it should be applied to any given year. The creation of a single currency is undoubtedly the most important economic step in the history

of Europe, and it really beggars belief that the EU should argue that this is desirable for a country with a budget deficit of 2.9 per cent of GDP in 1997, but wholly impossible for a country with a budget deficit of, say, 3.5 per cent of GDP. What really matters on this front is whether the political process in the country concerned is able to deliver a disciplined budget out-turn, not just in one year, but for the indefinite future.

The drafters of the treaty realised this with complete clarity, which is the reason they left so many deliberate loopholes in the definition of excessive deficits. Yet we now find ourselves in a position where the German finance minister, Theo Waigel, is arguing "3 per cent means 3 per cent", which suggests only those countries which can reduce their deficits below the magic number in 1997 should be admitted to the first round of EMU. Why has he adopted this position?

Almost certainly it is because this was thought to be the best way of excluding Italy from the 1999 start date for the single currency, while admitting those countries which the Germans believe have demonstrated their ability to stick with the discipline required for an indefinite period. When the Germans first adopted the 3 per cent formula, Italy seemed to have no chance of hitting this objective, but all the countries inside the Franco-German core of the system did. The 3 per cent budget target was therefore a convenient way of differentiating between those countries that the Germans wanted to include in the single currency, and those which they believed were unsuitable and unacceptable to the German electorate.

This was all very well until quite recently, but the problem now is that several countries that were supposed to have no trouble qualifying by hitting the 3 per cent limit are finding that they may

not be able to do so, and this even includes Germany itself. It most certainly includes France, despite some creative accounting designed to cut the deficit.

Furthermore, the markets are becoming increasingly concerned that the German and French deficits will exceed 3 per cent of GDP this year, which means that market confidence in the 1999 start date could disintegrate at any time. A ploy originally designed to provide a convenient means of excluding Italy from the first round is now beginning to threaten the participation of the core countries themselves.

This problem seems likely to come to a head during May, when the German government, in conjunction with independent economic forecasters, will publish an updated official projection for the 1997 budget deficit. This forecast update has become a focus of the international financial community, especially the key hedge funds. If the new projection exceeds 3 per cent of GDP by a significant margin, which seems quite possible, it will not be possible to continue with the present German line without threatening the entire process.

Some observers think that Chancellor Kohl will simply shrug his shoulders if this happens, and say the following: "We can no longer be sure that Germany will hit the budget criteria - we will have to wait and see." But this would leave the 1999 start date a hostage to the whims of the financial markets throughout the rest of the year, which is surely much too dangerous. Instead, it seems a great deal better to adopt the last resort of politicians - tell the truth. Assuming they still wish to maintain the 1999 start date, this would involve Germany and France saying: "We can no longer be sure of hitting the 3 per cent budget limits in 1997. But this would be for good reasons which were written into the Maastricht Treaty for precisely the present circumstances, in

which slow GDP growth is making it temporarily difficult to keep budgets under control. We are both confident that our budgetary positions are sustainable in the long run, which is the prime requirement of the treaty. But we are not yet convinced that this is true of some other countries, who have not achieved overall convergence for long enough to merit inclusion in the first round."

If the 1999 start date is to remain viable, it will be necessary at some point to make an adult statement of this kind. This would differentiate between countries on the grounds of an overall long-term assessment of the ability of their political systems to maintain disciplined economic policies indefinitely, and would give up the nonsense of pretending that the outcome for the budget in a single year is a satisfactory indicator of this key requirement.

Clearly, such a statement would not be welcomed in Italy, where the Prodi government has been making remarkable and brave efforts to hit the 3 per cent budget limit for this year. The Prodi administration has been a shining beacon compared to some of its predecessors, and it deserves to be given every possible encouragement from abroad. The prospect of early entry into a second round of EMU should be offered to it. But the fact of the matter is that Germany does not believe that first-round entry for Italy is politically acceptable to the German electorate, and is not wholly convinced that Romano Prodi or his successors can maintain the present budgetary momentum indefinitely. More time is needed to persuade them of this.

The bottom line is that the present German formula of "3 per cent means 3 per cent" is now threatening the entire EMU project. If they intend this to be the case, then so be it. If not, then the sooner they change it the better.

IN BRIEF

Steelworkers march on Frankfurt

Up to 50,000 steelworkers will march on Frankfurt tomorrow in protest at the proposed £5bn takeover by Krupp of the engineering giant Thyssen. The marchers intend to demonstrate in front of Deutsche Bank and Dresdner Bank, which are backing Krupp's hostile bid. The two companies called a temporary halt to hostilities last week and spent the weekend in talks at a secret location to discuss an alternative plan to merge their steel businesses. Spokesmen for the two sides said the talks were continuing but gave no further details. They have until Thursday to agree a deal, otherwise Krupp can resume its bid.

Job prospects 'best for seven years'

Job prospects are at their best for seven years with manufacturing companies leading the way, according to the employment consultant Manpower. Its latest survey of employment prospects shows that 26 per cent of firms expect to take on more workers in the next three months while only 12 per cent expect to cut jobs. This is the best second-quarter balance since 1991.

Investment in developing world at new high

Private investment in developing countries surged to a new record last year. The flow of investment has also started to spill over from a dozen favourites in South-east Asia and Latin America to a wider range of recipients. An astounding \$60bn surge took the total to \$244bn, according to a report by the World Bank.

World Bank overhaul, page 23

Directors oppose 48-hour working week

Company directors overwhelmingly oppose the implementation of the working-time directive which will limit working hours in most occupations to 48 hours a week, and 74 per cent will ask for an opt-out if the directive from Brussels is made law in the UK, according to a survey by the Institute of Directors. Ruth Lea, head of the Institute of Directors' policy unit, said: "Our members feel that the directive disregards the principle of freedom of contract, damages labour flexibility and adversely affects overtime."

Planned float values Bickerton at £6.1m

The building, joinery and property group Bickerton is to float on AIM in a move which will value the business at £6.1m. Just over 5 million shares are being placed at 40p each, representing a third of the company. The placing is being sponsored by Teather & Greenwood. Dealings are due to commence on 2 April.

Low paid fail to climb up income ladder

Somebody on low pay has scant chance of moving to a high income while the well-off tend to stay that way, according to research due to be presented at the annual conference of the Royal Economic Society today. The analysis by Jayasri Dutta, James Sefton and Martin Weale of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research confirms other recent research pointing to a lack of income mobility, with incomes of people in poorer groups likely to remain low relative to average income from year to year.

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• B110 Inlet Plain Paper...£240

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Contracts/Tenders

Tender for the Supply, Installation of Anechoic Chamber and Compliant EMC Instrumentation/Software

The London Borough of Enfield, working in conjunction with a private sector have been granted European Funding for the installation of a 3 metre Anechoic Chamber complete with test equipment, software and accessories to carry out testing to comply with the following EMC general standards:

EN50081-1/2

EN50082-1/2

EN55011, IEC 1000-4-23/45/6/9/11

Tenders must be submitted in the field of EMC test facility and be able to offer a complete package for supply, installation, commissioning, testing, calibration and equipment warranty. The tender will be in two parts:

A. Test equipment, software and all accessories including PC's and printers.

B. 3 metre Anechoic Chamber, size 7m x 3m x 3m. This completed Anechoic Chamber must have calibration certificate to UKAS standards.

Applications for Tender documents for London Borough of Enfield, PO Box 28, Chiswick, Silver Street, Enfield, EN1 3XA. FAX: 0181 987 9673 or Fax No. 0181 987 9405.

Closing date for Tender applications: 27th April 1997

Final date for receipt of Tenders: 30th April 1997

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Until its purpose is defined, any attempt at reform will cause chaos, writes Michael Prest

World Bank seeks role for 21st century

World Bank staff, weary of a decade of hand-fisted re-organisations, will be watching with trepidation to see whether or not a board meeting scheduled for Thursday approves the latest controversial and radical attempt to overhaul the organisation.

The plan, designed to equip the world's most important development institution for the next century, was supposed to have been approved last week. But a decision was postponed after becoming mired in the politics of Washington, where the bank is based. At one end of Pennsylvania Avenue, the United States administration, the bank's most powerful shareholder, had made no secret of its misgivings about the plan's effectiveness. At the other end, up on the Hill, a Congress invariably suspicious of the bank seized on the proposed increase in the bank's budget to pay for the overhaul as yet another proof of its profligacy. Britain and France, two other large shareholders, differed in the US's shadow.

Although the delay keeps the bank's 6,000 staff and dozens of very poor countries on tenterhooks, it is probably

welcomed by Jim Wolfensohn, the institution's aggressive president. He has personally promoted the overhaul as a "strategic compact" which will be the moment to his term of office.

It might seem strange that the World Bank needs another re-organisation. It has \$185bn of capital, lends \$20bn a year to poor countries, enjoys great prestige as a centre of research and expertise in all aspects of development, and has an immensely able multi-national staff.

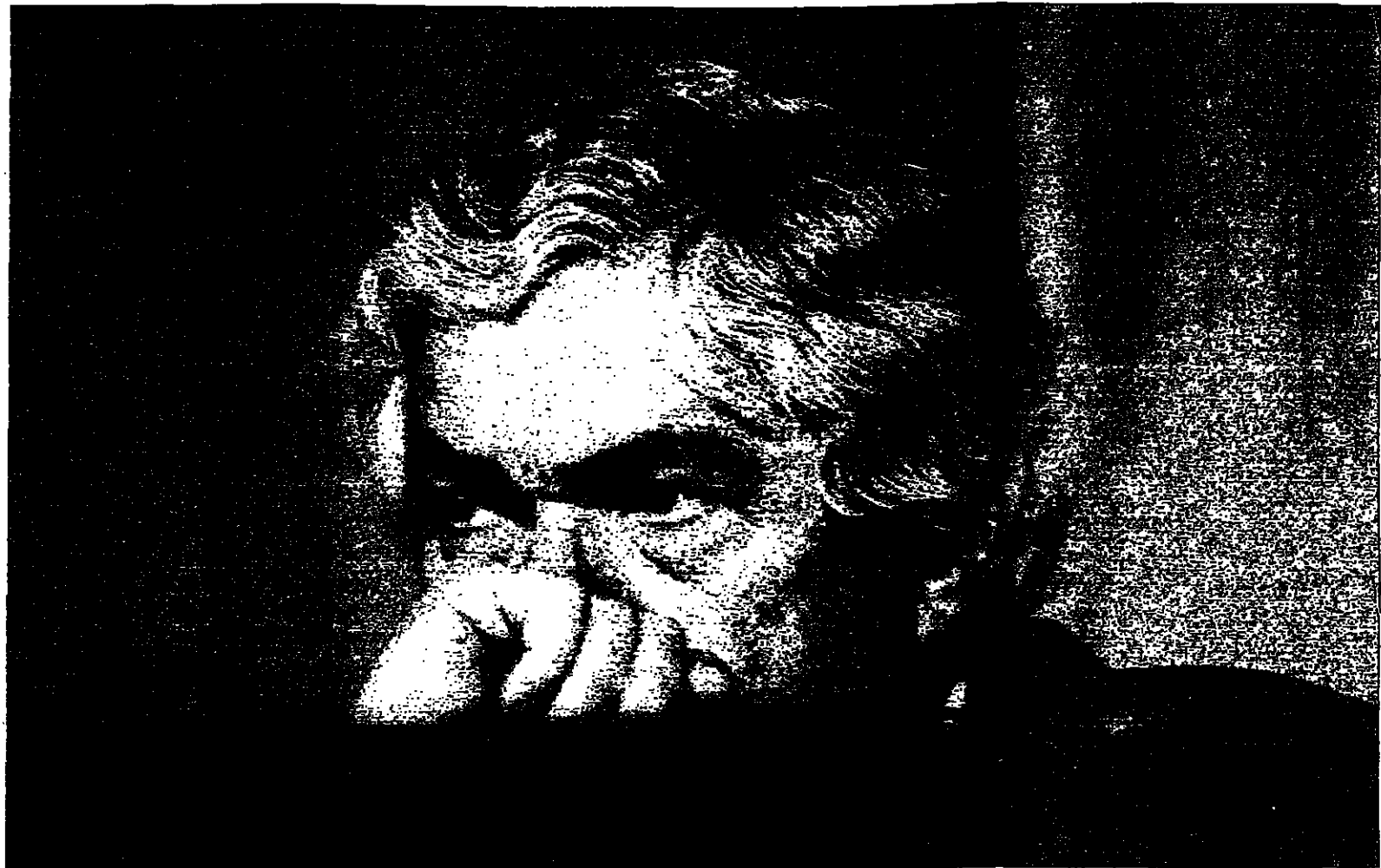
Most important, its record is creditable. Despite well-publicised mistakes and disasters, it is hard to believe that the \$330bn the bank has lent since its creation in 1944 has not helped to fuel the extraordinary growth in prosperity throughout the world generally, and the developing world particularly, since the Second World War.

But drastic change is needed. While the bank retains great strengths, it has adjusted slowly to the world around it. Surging private capital flows, declining official aid, many more centres of development expertise, a recognition that development is about much more than funding roads and power stations, and the technological revolution

which has transformed commercial companies have largely passed the bank by. The bank remains slow, bureaucratic, paper-driven and unimaginative. It is simply not an organisation fit for the 21st century, let alone fit to be a pillar of the emerging global economy.

Both of Wolfensohn's predecessors, Barber Conable and Lewis Preston, tried and failed to bring the bank up to date. Faced with the facts, documents Wolfensohn submitted to the board bluntly admitted "without significant changes in procedures and incentives, the bank will remain inward looking, risk averse and unfriendly to innovation and partnership".

Will Wolfensohn succeed? The compact is nothing if not ambitious. It is a revolution in an organisation addicted to evolution. The compact accepts that one third of bank-financed projects do not meet the bank's own performance targets. Demand for bank loans is flat despite it being the cheapest source of loan finance available to developing countries, and as a result income will fall. Expertise is lacking in key sectors such as human development and health and education, and clients complain that the bank



Jim Wolfensohn: The president has alienated his staff with references to the World Bank's 'marshmallow middle management'

is clumsily slow and its services do not fit their individual needs.

The solution is to cut costs and focus the business. Wolfensohn wants to reverse the allocation of resources so that in future about 60 per cent of the bank's \$1.1bn annual budget goes to front-line services and 40 per cent to administrative and support services. The hope is the budget can be held more or less constant in real terms.

Achieving this will involve abolishing three central units covering private sector development, the environment and human resources, and merging their experts with counterparts in the bank's regional vice-presidencies to form networks at the disposal of country managers. Armed with the latest information technology, the networks will capitalise on the bank's greatest resource — knowledge to provide a flexible

service. More staff will also be redeployed from Washington to developing countries.

Management consultants KPMG have been hired to examine cost savings in areas such as office space, technology, and salaries and benefits. The restructuring calls for about 500 redundancies among staff, and the expectation is that within a few years a higher proportion of the staff will be temporary. Under the revised version of the compact designed to appease the US, redundancies will cost about \$100m and the compact's net cost of \$250m will be spread over two-and-a-half fiscal years, starting on 1 July 1997.

Much of this makes sense. It faces formidable obstacles, however. First, demoralised staff have greeted the compact with cynicism. While the compact is supposed to be between the bank and the shareholders, it is seen by many staff as being between the management and the shareholders. The atmosphere has been soured by

Wolfensohn, who is said to have referred to the bank's "marshmallow middle management", and by US demands that the often generous pay and conditions of staff be reviewed.

Second, many details remain to be clarified. Despite an outpouring of fat documents, most staff have difficulty explaining how the networks will function. The danger of trying to catch up with one mighty bound is that the pieces of the bank do not lock together. The bank is such a complex organism that change in one place can have unpredictable consequences in another. There is a real danger of the exercise running out of control. There will certainly be turmoil.

And third, it is questionable whether bureaucracies, especially international ones, can reform themselves. The bank's staff, including the president, are civil servants, even if they do not always behave as such. The abiding tragedy of the World Bank is that the owners — the 180 member countries — have

never taken a lead. They have failed to explain clearly to the bank and their own publics what they want the bank to do and how they expect it to do it.

The result has been an organisation which is too thinly spread. Development no longer concentrates on funding physical infrastructure or even economic reform. Today, development theory and practice embrace virtually every aspect of a society's advancement. No single bank, however well-funded and staffed, can cope with development in its entirety. Yet the list of supposed priorities in the compact under the optimistic heading of "Refocusing the Development Agenda" should make even the stoutest flinch.

Nobody should mind if the World Bank's shareholders delay the strategic compact further to grapple with the future of an organisation which will remain vital for the planet's 1.3 billion desperately poor.

Michael Prest was on the staff of the World Bank from 1990 to 1995



The cheapest source of finance: Since 1944, the bank has lent \$330bn to the world's poorest countries but now demand for its loans is flat

Inflation set to rise as growth slows in 1998

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

The economy will slow down sharply next year after this year's election-related boom, according to two sets of forecasts published today. The next government is likely to inherit rising inflation and weaker growth in 1998.

Chancellor Kenneth Clarke has successfully engineered a pre-election boom whose costs will not be felt until next year, a report from Oxford Economic Forecasts claims. Not only does this boom not seem to be improving the Government's popularity in the opinion polls, it says, it also "presents the next government with a legacy of both rising inflation and a manufacturing sector suffering under an uncompetitive exchange rate".

The warning is echoed in separate research published by City

investment bank UBS. Its latest economic forecasts predict a sharp slowdown in GDP growth between this year and next, and an increase in the underlying measure of inflation to well above the Government's target.

Both sets of experts see the strong pound biting into investment and exports, although soaring consumer spending will offset these effects for most of this year.

But the higher pay increases that have been triggered by big falls in unemployment will also be feeding through to inflation next year. While neither forecast sees inflation climbing very far, at least by comparison with past experience, it is likely to be significantly above the 2.5 per cent target set by the Conservatives and adopted by Labour.

Figures last week showing an unexpected increase in earnings growth alarmed economists, who saw it joining record

consumer credit and rising house prices as an inflation alarm bell. Both the Oxford group and UBS see the pace of growth declining from about 3 per cent this year to 2 per cent or less next year. They predict that underlying inflation will rise from below to above 3 per cent.

A dissenting view is contained in a separate report today from consultants at the Centre for Economic and Business Research. According to Professor Douglas Williams, "Labour has never come to power before with the economy in such good shape. The challenge for them, if they win this time, will be to keep it there."

He reckons the strong pound will not outweigh the impact on growth of strong consumer spending and the possibility of higher public expenditure under a Labour government. The inevitable slowdown will not come until 1999, he predicts.

Northern scraps London link-up

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Northern Electric, the regional power company taken over by the US group CalEnergy last year, has abandoned plans hatched by the old management to merge its electricity and gas supply operations with London Electricity.

The plan, announced by the former Northern chairman David Morris in December, was a key plank of Northern Electric's defence against CalEnergy's hostile £782m bid. Although Northern never admitted London was its partner, the aim was to slash costs by combining the customer service operations of the two companies in preparation for domestic power and gas competition in 1998.

The plan was seen as having some commercial logic, because London has a multi-

million pound, 24-hour customer service centre in Sunderland, employing 600 staff working on billing support and telephone enquiries. Northern's two customer centres are based in Newcastle and a new site near Thornaby on Teesside.

London, now taken over by another US utility, Entergy, chose the Wearside location because of its comparatively cheap labour and building costs.

The decision to scrap the joint venture with London is one of the first to be taken by David Sokol, CalEnergy's chairman, since he took control of Northern. Mr Sokol has replaced most of Northern's management, putting CalEnergy executive Greg Abel in charge of reappraising the Tyneside company's long-term strategy. Insiders were stunned that Mr Morris was given a seat on CalEnergy's board, though he no longer has a role at Northern.

REWARDS TODAY

For Bradford & Bingley's Members.
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	£5,000+	3.50	2.64	-	-
	£10,000+	3.50	2.64	-	-
	£25,000+	3.50	2.64	-	-
Fit Day Plus (Including Bonus)	£1,000+	4.50	3.60	4.25	3.40
	£5,000+	5.00	4.00	4.75	3.80
	£10,000+	5.75	4.56	5.45	4.26
	£25,000+	5.75	4.56	5.45	4.26
	£50,000+	5.90	4.72	5.60	4.42
	£100,000+	6.20	4.96	5.95	4.76
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	£100,000+	6.40	5.12	6.15	4.92
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	£10,000+	6.15	4.72	-	-
High Return TESSA - Issue 2 High Return 2 Feature		6.75*	-	-	-
		6.75*	5.40	-	-
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	£5,000+	3.35	2.68	-	-
	£10,000+	3.55	2.84	-	-
	£25,000+	3.55	2.84	-	-
One Month Notice	£200+	2.60	2.08	2.55	2.04
	£2,500+	2.80	2.24	2.70	2.16
	£10,000+	3.00	2.40	2.85	2.28
	£25,000+	3.40	2.72	3.25	2.60
	£50,000+	4.00	3.20	3.80	3.04
Special Asset	£2,500+	3.75	3.00	3.65	2.92
	£5,000+	4.10	3.28	4.00	3.20
	£10,000+	4.75	3.80	4.50	3.60
	£20,000+	4.80	3.84	4.50	3.60
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		6.75*	-	-	-
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		5.75	4.00	5.75	4.00

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back page: the week starts here

IN THE INDEPENDENT THIS WEEK



George Grosz:
Savage satirist of post-war Germany



Leonardo di Caprio
A Romeo to die for. New film, new fame, interview



Roseanne Cash
Singer who wanted to write

plus
Don Was, Suzanne Vega

WHERE TO GO, WHAT TO SEE, WHAT TO DO

A Brit crop?

Oscars: The Academy Awards Ceremony opens its doors to give us the annual, ample glimpse into Tinseltown. This year could be special. *The English Patient* has 12 nominations, Mike Leigh's *Secrets & Lies* follows closely behind. Watch Ralph Fiennes from *The English Patient* beat off Tom Cruise (Jerry Maguire) for best actor and Emily Watson of *Breaking the Waves* win with Best Actress. Live on BBC2 with Barry Norman, 2-6am. Highlights 10-12pm BBC1, Tuesday.

Virtual sport

Exhibition: *The Science of Sport* at London's Science Museum – an introduction to the role that science and technology is playing in our sporting life. From Friday it will be open to the public to experience the simulated thrill of Grand Prix racing, or the desperate emotion of a penalty shoot-out. *la Gare* Southgate, using audiovisual equipment. 10am-6pm. £8.95 adults, £3.20 children, concs £2.0990 661 030 (+75p booking fee)



Colin Firth:
New *Lad* incarnate

Pitching up

Film: New *Lad* icons will be up for the film premier of Nick Hornby's soccer saga *Fever Pitch* on Wednesday. Expect to see the Arsenal team, David Baddiel, Martin Clunes, and the stars Colin Firth and Ruth Gemmel. Has anyone done more for the gentrification of soccer than the Arsenal-obsessed Hornby? UCI Empire, Leicester Square, 7.30pm. General release: 4 April.

Film talk: Get steamed up over a new version of *The Railway Children* at London's Barbican Cinema on Wednesday. You can meet the stars – Bernard Cribbins, Jenny Agutter and the director Lionel Jeffries. (Wed only, then opens nationwide on the 28th). Adults £20, children £12

Toughs at the top

TV: There are three footballing legends who make our current crop seem like lads in the park. In a three-part series starting on Easter Friday and running over the weekend, Hugh McIlvanney looks at *The Football Men* – Matt Busby, Jock Stein and Bill Shankly. As his brother, the novelist William McIlvanney, says: "Those men brought from their backgrounds an instant ability to command respect. You knew these were people not to mess around with". BBC2 9.30pm

More TV: Channel 5 arrives on Sunday (5pm), though not for those yet to be tuned into this brave new view.

Let's twist again
Fun: A massive 'Twister'-thon to celebrate the 30th birthday of this limb-tangling

game (five million sold to date and many a party enlivened by the colour-dotted plastic sheets) is taking place in London's Broadgate on Tuesday. One-time world champion Rick Burney takes on the equally famous, evil Twister Man Tim "Iron Spider" Maguire. 12pm

Egging on

Easter: Country houses are scattering eggs all over their gardens in an attempt to draw the crowds. At Appuldurcombe House on the Isle of Wight on Sunday, thousands of eggs will be hidden in the lawns and foliage of the 11-acre grounds. From 10am. Adults £2, children £1, concs. £1.50. 01983 852484. At Carlisle Castle on Sunday there will be luxury "medieval" eggs decorated with heraldic and Celtic-influenced designs made from almond paste. Ends 31 March. £2.70 (adults), £2 (concs), £1.40 (children). 01228 591992

Blues bother

Sport: The end could be nigh for Cambridge's recent domination of the Boat Race. For once, the crews are mostly culled from within the limits of these shores. The Cambridge crew, at 5'4", will be the tallest in the event's history. Start 4pm. Putney to Mortlake.

Best of Britten

Music: The 4th annual Aldeburgh early music festival takes place on the 27th and has rapidly built on the status conferred on the town by Britten back in the Fifties. At the Snape Maltings Concert Hall. Ends 31 March. Concert on 28th is sold out. £4-£14. 01728 452935.

Circle in round

Installation: The celebrated American choreographer William Forsythe has created a vast new piece of installation art, *Tight Roaring Circle*, at the Roundhouse in London's Camden, in collaboration with Dana Caspersen. They specialise in integrating language, architecture and technology, and both have been involved in ballet work. Chalk Farm Road, 5-9pm, weekends 3pm-8pm. Opens Wednesday, ends 27 April. £4.50, concs £2.50. 0171 336 6803

Revue: *Then Again* at the Lyric Hammersmith on Thursday promises to be simply wonderful, darling, with writers such as Julian Clary and Harold Pinter and performers including Dawn French and Sheila Hancock. 7.30pm (except 27th: 7pm). Sat mat 2.30pm. £10-15 (sold out all Mons/closed Easter w/e) 0181-741 2311

At last

It's British Summer Time on Sunday, with clocks to be put forward one hour from 2am.



Rock 'n' roll

Pop: *The Greatest 70's Rock Show Ever* – although you don't have to believe everything you read in the publicity – begins a two-month tour with those matinee greats, Showaddywaddy, and the heroically ubiquitous Alvin Stardust, above. Tonight: Plymouth Pavilions. 7.30. 01752 229922. £9.50-£13.50. Nationwide to 19 April. Goodrich Castle, Hereford and Worcester, stages a folk festival on Sunday and Monday with bagpipes to the fore. From midday, £2.30 adults, £1.20 children, £1.70 concs. Under-fives free. 01600 690338. Or you could try and be a bit more up-to-date by going to see the new band Spaceland, tipped to be the next big thing – by 'Q' magazine amongst others – with their collection of catchy tunes and semi-punk sound at London's Camden Palace tomorrow night, 8pm. £3, £5. 0171 387 0428

Whatever you are doing this week, you would do better in Dubai. Whatever the weather, Dubai will be warmer, whatever food and drink you will get, Dubai is richer, rarer, more abundant. If you are going to a party in England, eat your heart out: Dubai parties are grander, more lavish; they have mass bands and stars who shine resplendent, like the desert sky.

The Maktoom family, hell bent on turning their patch of Emirate sand into a tourist resort and world-class venue for thoroughbred racing, are hosts to Saturday's 10-furlong international, with more than £1m to the winner.

To persuade the best horses and their owner, trainer and jockey to go nowhere else at the weekend, the Dubai package includes free transport for selected horses, first-class air fare, hotel suites, stretch limousines and every little thing to make "connections" happy.

I was invited last year to ensure favourable media coverage, hacks were treated to a week of milk and honey, with long-distance phone calls, dry-cleaning, vintage champagne for breakfast and massage sessions in the health club thrown in.

Why, then, am I sitting in the dining-room of a hotel near Dublin, wondering whether they have microwaved the egg, bacon, sausage and tomato, and would I have been better off with a kipper?

I was not asked to Dubai this year. That's why. In thanking my hosts for last year's extravagance, I referred to the visit as "the mother of all freebies".

Rather as my erstwhile colleagues at Westminster would have told me, "when there is bounty to be had, grab hold of it and keep your mouth shut".

In 1996, Sheikh Mohammed's nightmare scenario had been success for his own horses: a Maktoom one, two and three would have finished off Dubai's ambitions to attract the best horses in the universe to run in the world's richest race. As it was, the Californian Cigar won: two American horses followed him home and the Sheikh beamed. This meeting will run and run.

If you want to bet on Saturday's race, it might be wise to ignore anything from Europe (turf horses have difficulties with the triangular track and the soft dirt surface), but the Japanese Hokuto Vega at 33-1 represents fair-weather value.

The publication of useless statistics is with us once more, and will flourish as readers search for subject matters away from politics. From a psychological magazine: "In an average week the average man now has a 60 per cent likelihood of having a below average time." From *Pets and Pet Owners*: "A recent survey shows that out of 100 blind men who ask people to direct them, three-quarters of those they approach lean down and give instructions to the guide dog."

MY WEEK

From the Aer Lingus in-flight magazine, an in-depth piece on cabbages states: "The real monstrosity of the cabbages' cursed nature is not just the stink, but the fact that the more you cook it, the more the stench increases. The amount of hydrogen sulphide produced in boiled cabbage doubles between the 5th and 7th minute of cooking."

CLEMENT FREUD

A recent survey shows that three-quarters of those who give directions to blind men lean down and give instructions to the guide dog

Do not miss McIlvanney on Busby, Stein and Shankly (see left) and as you watch, shed a tear for the supporters of the many journeyman football clubs whose supporters don't have a lot to remember and hardly anything to look forward to. The economics of today's professional game mean that if a club has a centrally situated ground, a good manager or a good team, some or all of these are sold, for insufficient money to replace any of the three assets.

Plymouth Argyle, from whom we expected so much, are a case in point. A crowd of 5,468 saw them beaten at home, which put paid to lingering hopes of finishing in the top half of their modest division, which might have enabled them to change their strip and merchandise their way out of trouble. Beryl Cooke lives in Plymouth; she is even richer than Delia Smith, who lives in East Anglia and became a director of Norwich. Cooke should buy Home Park.

A poem – perhaps for 'Readers Digest': There was a young man from Peru Whose blunders stopped at line two.

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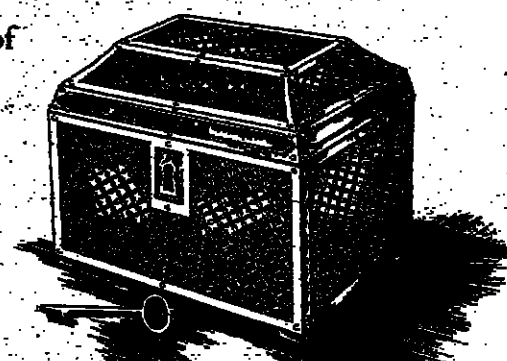
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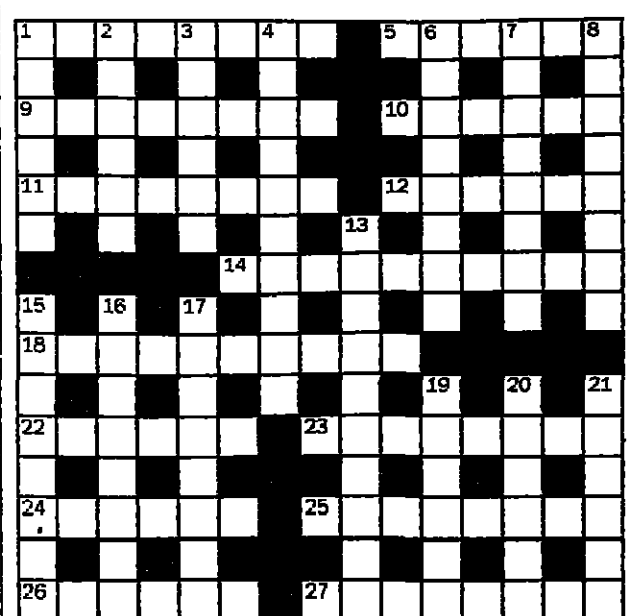
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THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3254, Monday 24 March

By Purita



ACROSS
1 Go through the motions to celebrate occasion (4,4)
5 Foreign money order is irregular (6)
9 Whole point of blood-thirsty myth (8)
10 Tracks down rumour in seconds (6)
11 Way of travelling round? (4,4)
12 Sounds like a decent business (6)
14 Pull a heavy weight with a kind of engine (10)
18 Banter from attendant about dud rifles (10)
22 Artist comes from N.E. Yorkshire (6)
23 One's certain to be replaced almost immediately (2,1,5)
24 Independent doctor's inside information on girl (6)
25 Area that's well-covered? (8)
26 A guy appears relaxed (2,4)

DOWN
1 Lacking only silver lining (6)
2 Sorry about length of judgement (6)
3 Follow alternative East Indian poet (6)
4 Commercial centre I am left to sort out (10)
6 Note detail on back of craft object (8)
7 Pole abandons dog in Adriatic region (8)
8 Wrong impression? (8)
13 Be without new training vessel (10)
15 Trespass around separate area of grass (8)
16 Writing about border plant (8)
17 Compare with three-quarters finished portrait (8)
19 Man on American island (6)
20 In favour of admitting popular English dramatist (6)
21 Fond of present (6)

هكذا من الأصل